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SIR REDVERS H. BULLER, V.C.



Photo by]

[C. Knight, Aldershot.

GENERAL SIR REDVERS H. BULLER, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G.

SIR REDVERS H. BULLER, V.C.

The Story of his Life and Campaigns

BY

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ENGLAND'S GREAT COMMONER," ETC.

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

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To
FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT WOLSELEY, K.P.
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
IS DEDICATED BY PERMISSION THIS STORY
OF THE LIFE AND CAMPAIGNS OF
SIR REDVERS BULLER, V.C.
ONE OF THE MANY BRAVE SOLDIERS
WHO HAVE WON FAME UNDER
HIS COMMAND.

PREFACE

NO apology is needed for a book which tells for the first time the life-story of the hero of the hour. It may, however, be as well for the biographer to explain that he is in no sense a military expert. He has simply sought to piece together from many scattered sources something like a complete sketch of the distinguished career of one of the greatest soldiers of the day—Sir Redvers Buller.

That such a sketch was necessary has been proved again and again during the past few weeks, when many stories and purely imaginary biographical details about Sir Redvers have appeared in certain popular journals.

The true story of a great soldier's life is necessarily, to a very considerable extent, bound up with the histories of the campaigns in which he

has been engaged, and though many of us can recall the incidents of, say the Zulu War, there are large numbers of readers who are naturally interested in Sir Redvers Buller at the present moment who know nothing of that splendid work of his on "the Mount of Valour," which won for him the well-merited decoration of the Victoria Cross. It is, indeed, remarkable that the life-story of a man whose active service began so far back as the China War of 1860 should be so little known.

This small volume has therefore been prepared with the object of placing before all who are anxiously following the daily record of the war in South Africa a sketch of the career of the distinguished leader on whom so much depends and who it may be safely asserted enjoys in the fullest sense the confidence of the entire nation.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. A SON OF DEVONSHIRE—OTHER FIGHTING SONS — CREDITON — PARENTAGE — EDUCATION — CHOICE OF A PROFESSION	17
II. FIRST COMMISSION—STORY OF THE 60TH— <i>CELER ET AUDAX</i> —FIRST CAMPAIGN—IN THE FAR EAST	31
III. CANADA—A FRESH EXPEDITION—A DIFFICULT JOURNEY—A BLOODLESS VICTORY	43
IV. ON THE STAFF—THE ASHANTI WAR—A RESPON- SIBLE POSITION—HONOURS AND PROMOTION	58
V. INHERITS DOWNES — LIFE IN DEVONSHIRE — APPOINTMENT AT HEADQUARTERS — THE KAFIR WAR—BULLER'S LIGHT HORSE . . .	80
VI. THE ZULU WAR—PROMOTION—WITH SIR EVELYN WOOD — SOME BRILLIANT ACTIONS — THE MOUNT OF VALOUR—A WELL-EARNED V.C. .	98

CHAP.	PAGE
VII. ZULU WAR CONTINUED—ADVANCE ON ULUNDI— BULLER AND THE PRINCE IMPERIAL—A BRILLIANT SCOUTING—THE FINAL BATTLE .	130
VIII. A CORDIAL RECEPTION—FRESH HONOURS— OFFICIAL POST—AIDE-DE-CAMP TO THE QUEEN—AFRICA AGAIN—THE FIRST BOER WAR—BULLER AND AMAJUBA HILL . . .	155
IX. FIRST EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN—TEL EL-KEBIR— KNIGHTHOOD—MARRIAGE—SUAKIN—EL TEB AND TAMAI—EGYPT AGAIN— <i>EN ROUTE</i> FOR KHARTUM—A MASTERLY RETREAT—A GOOD STORY	186
X. SPECIAL COMMISSION IN IRELAND—FEARLESS AS EVER—THINKING FOR HIMSELF—UNDER- SECRETARY FOR IRELAND—HEADQUARTERS APPOINTMENTS	214
XI. THE TRANSVAAL WAR—SOME PERSONAL CHA- RACTERISTICS	232

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
GENERAL SIR REDVERS H. BULLER, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (From a photograph by C. Knight, Aldershot.)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
JAMES WENTWORTH BULLER, ESQ., THE FATHER OF SIR REDVERS BULLER	27
(From a painting photographed by Henry Cornish, Crediton.)	
DOWNES, CREDITON, THE HOME OF SIR REDVERS BULLER	82
THE ACT WHICH WON FOR GENERAL BULLER THE VICTORIA CROSS	125
THE LIBRARY AT DOWNES	157
(From a photograph by Henry Cornish, Crediton.)	
LADY AUDREY BULLER	187
(From a photograph by Bullingham.)	
SIR REDVERS BULLER AND HIS CHARGER, "IRON- MONGER"	215
(From a photograph by C. Knight, Aldershot.)	
GENERAL THE RT. HON. REDVERS, VISCOUNT BULLER OF WAREHAM DOWN AND SETTLEHAM, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., V.C.	236
(Reproduced from "Punch," Oct. 11th, by kind permission of Messrs. Bradbury, Agnew & Co., Ltd.)	

SIR REDVERS H. BULLER, V.C. :

The Story of his Life and Campaigns



CHAPTER I

A son of Devonshire—Other fighting sons—Creditor—
Parentage—Education—Choice of a profession.

SIR REDVERS HENRY BULLER adds one more to the already long list of Devonshire's military and naval heroes—a list that may be carried back to the borderland between history and myth, where we learn of the arrival on the Devon coast of Brutus of Troy. The roll of modern heroes begins during the days of Queen Elizabeth, when Sir Francis Drake, Sir Richard Grenville, Sir John Hawkins, and Sir Walter Raleigh were among the most prominent of

those who waged war on behalf of their native land, and who extended the power and glory of the Queen's dominions over both the Old and New Worlds. In Devonshire, too, were born General Monk, one of the chief military heroes of the seventeenth century, and John Churchill, afterwards Duke of Marlborough, the dominant military genius of the eighteenth.

For personal bravery Sir Redvers Buller may challenge comparison with any of his illustrious fellow-Devonians, as will be seen when we come to record the stirring story of how it was that he won the Victoria Cross, while his standing as a military leader is best realised by our remembering that his appointment as Commander-in-Chief in the war against the Transvaal has put him in command of a greater force of British soldiers than has ever before left the United Kingdom to carry war into an enemy's country or to repel the invaders of a British colony.

That part of Devonshire with which the name of Buller will henceforward be most intimately associated is Crediton, an old-world

town, with some four thousand inhabitants, lying about eight miles to the north-west of Exeter—"a curious, sleepy place, the houses, like the great church, built of red sandstone, where not of the red clay or cob." Locally the town is spoken of as "Kirton," and its antiquity is insisted upon in an old Devon rhyme which declares that—

"When Exeter was a vuzzy down,
Kirton was a market town."

At one time Crediton was noted as a seat of the cloth trade, and its inhabitants were proud of the fact that the excellence of their manufacture was celebrated in the proverb which spoke of things being "as fine as Kirton spinning." In the history of the county, and indeed of the country, Crediton occupies an important position, too, as being the place in which was established the first bishopric in the West (909). Over two centuries earlier still the town had been the birthplace of a Saxon named Wynfrith, who became widely known as St. Boniface, the apostle of Christianity to Germany.

To come, however, to times nearer to the present and to matters more intimately connected with our subject. Among the family seats around Crediton there is one lying a mile or so towards Exeter, known as Downes, which takes its name from the *dun*, or old fort, that at one time occupied the hill-top between the rivers Yeo and Creedy which unite below it. This estate has been in the hands of the Bullers for over a century and a half, having before that belonged to Sir Redvers' ancestors in the female line of the name of Gould. In the beginning of last century it belonged to William Gould, and as he had no son it descended to his eldest daughter, who married James Buller, of Morval, in the neighbouring county of Cornwall. In connection with this marriage, and with these ancestors of the hero of to-day, Mr. Baring-Gould tells a pathetic story in his "Book of the West." Shobrooke, it may be said, is the name of the estate bordering upon Downes. "The latter belonged to William Gould, and James Buller, of Morval, obtained it by marrying his eldest daughter and heiress, Elizabeth, born in 1718.

The younger and only other sister, Frances, married John Tuckfield, of Shobrooke Park, then known as Little Fulford. This was in 1740, when she was only eighteen. The respective husbands quarrelled about money and politics, and forbade their wives to meet and speak to each other. . . . The sisters were wont to walk every day to a certain point in the respective grounds and wave their handkerchiefs to each other, and they never met in this world again, for Elizabeth died in 1742."

The Bullers were originally a Cornish family, and one of them, a Sir Richard Buller, was one of the Parliamentary leaders in the West when Charles and his Parliament were first at loggerheads. The family is said to have settled originally in Cornwall, in the earlier part of the sixteenth century ; indeed Playfair, in his "*British Family Antiquities*," says : "The Buller family is of very ancient establishment in this country, and has chiefly resided in Devonshire and Cornwall, where its respective branches have been long in possession of considerable landed property. The name

of Buller, whose name we cannot satisfactorily account for, has been justly celebrated not only in the navy but in the Church and in the law." Shortly before the time that that passage was written, the Crediton branch of the Buller family had given an admiral to the Navy, a bishop to the Church, and a judge to the Bench. Admiral Buller and Bishop Buller, it may be added, were both of them sons, while the judge was a grandson, of the above-mentioned James Buller, of Morval, by his second marriage. By his first marriage he had but one child, a son, who was the great-great-grandfather of our military hero of to-day. Through his maternal ancestress, who became wife of James Buller, Sir Redvers Buller can claim Royal descent from King Edward the First, through that monarch's daughter Elizabeth, whose daughter married Hugh de Courtenay, Earl of Devonshire.

The military leader's Christian name, by the way, is a very old one in Devonshire, dating from the time of the Norman Conquest, and its use points to his family connection being traceable to Baldwin the Sheriff, or Baldwin de

Redvers, who was at one time the most important feudal lord in Devonshire. When William the Conqueror was rewarding those who had furthered his cause, it is said that no fewer than 181 parishes fell to the share of De Redvers in Devonshire alone, "and from among them all he selected 'Ochementone' (far more closely preserved in the still current 'Ockington' of the natives than in the polite and utterly un-etymological Okehampton) for his chief residence. Ninety-two fees were held of this barony. Here in the centre of his domains, in the very heart of Devon, commanding the passes to the north and west of Dartmoor, and dominating the district far away to the Severn Sea, he reared his castle. None of his masonry remains ; but the site is that which he chose, the mound is that which he scarped and isolated from the hillside of which it formed a rocky spur ; and the surroundings have changed little from the day when the square Norman keep first frowned upon the brawling waters of the rapid Ockment in the valley below.

" For a time the house of Redvers flourished.

Not only did they hold the chief barony of Devon in Okehampton; not only were they hereditary castellans of Exeter, and sheriffs of the county, but Richard, son of Baldwin, by his faithful adherence to Henry I., gained the town of Tiverton and the honour of Plympton. His son, Baldwin, espoused the cause of Matilda, and was driven from the kingdom with the loss of all his great possessions. Yet it was not long ere the De Redverses were reinstated in their honours and estates; and it was marriage with Mary, daughter of William de Verona, sixth Redvers Earl, the co-heiress of that great family, that the historic house of Courtenay became not only lords of Okehampton, but eventually obtained the earldom of Devon they again so worthily enjoy. With occasional intermissions of forfeiture the Courtenays held Okehampton from the death of Isabella de Fortibus, in 1292, until the death of Edward Courtenay in 1556."¹

King Henry the First created Richard Redvers Earl of Devon and Lord of the Isle of Wight, and when Edward Courtenay died

¹ "A History of Devonshire," by R. N. Worth.

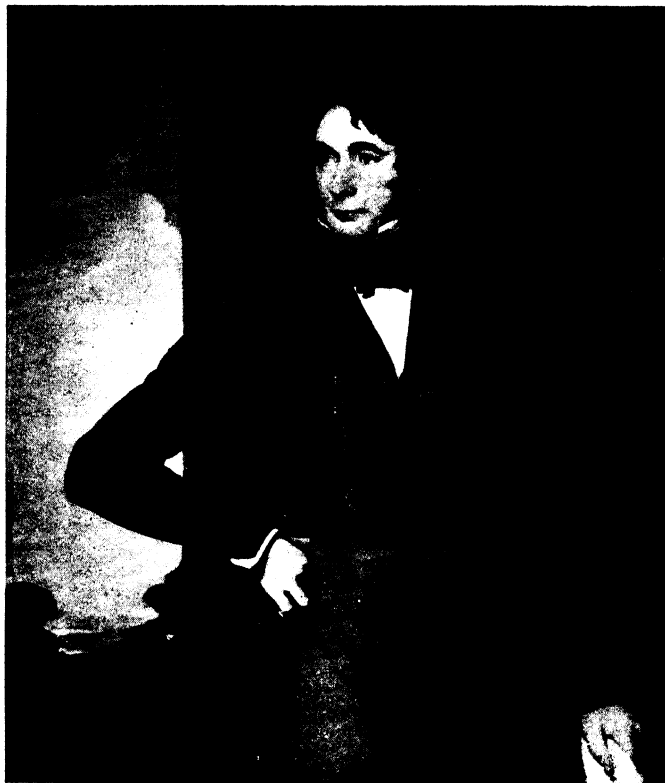
abroad, in the reign of Queen Mary, "Margaret, wife of Richard Buller," was adjudged one of his heirs. She had been twice married, and by her second marriage with "Richard Buller, of Tregarrick," she became the ancestress of the Bullers of Shillingham and of Downes. Sir Redvers is tenth in direct descent from her. During the second and third years of the reign of Henry the Second, Richard Redvers, Earl of Devon, was also sheriff of the county.

One branch of the Buller family of Crediton has been established for nearly a century at Lupton, near Brixham, on the south coast of the county. This branch descended from Sir Francis Buller (1746-1800), Justice of the King's Bench. The judge has been, but apparently with no justification, accused of removing Druidical remains from one of the Dartmoor "Tors," and has also been accused of being the originator of the dictum that a husband may beat his wife, if the stick with which he administers the castigation be not thicker than his thumb. He married the heiress of the Yards of Churston, and his family took

the name of Yarde-Buller ; their son was raised to the peerage in 1858, as Baron Churston, and his grandson is the present holder of the title.

Yet another distinguished member of the family was Charles Buller, a well-known Liberal politician, who was a pupil of Thomas Carlyle's at Edinburgh, and who became a close friend of Lord Tennyson, William Makepeace Thackeray, and other men of letters of the mid part of the nineteenth century.

Redvers Henry Buller, who sprang thus from a stock celebrated through several centuries, was born on December 7, 1839, at the family seat of Downes, near Crediton. He was the second son of James Wentworth Buller, who had also been born at Downes on October 1, 1798, had been educated at Harrow and Oriel College, Oxford, had sat as Member of Parliament for Exeter from July, 1830, to December, 1834—throughout the tempestuous "Reform" period—and as member for North Devon from April, 1857, until his death. Wentworth Buller was also, for many years, Colonel of the 1st Devonshire Yeomanry Cavalry. Sir Redvers Buller's



JAMES WENTWORTH BULLER, ESQ., THE FATHER OF
SIR REDVERS BULLER.

(From a painting photographed by Henry Cornish, Crediton.)

mother was Charlotte, third daughter of Lord Henry Howard and niece of the twelfth Duke of Norfolk.

Born in Devonshire, young Buller was one of a large family numbering seven sons and four daughters. His childhood was mainly passed in the delightful county which had given him birth amid the beautiful well-wooded scenery of Western Devonshire. His education the future General received at Eton — a college famous as the training-ground of several illustrious military and naval leaders, among whom were the Duke of Wellington and Field-Marshal Lord Roberts. At Eton,

“Bright with names that men remember, loud with names
that men forget,”

as Mr. Swinburne has put it, Redvers Buller remained for some years. While he was there, when he was but a lad of sixteen, he had the terrible misfortune to lose his mother, who died on December 15, 1855. From the school lists of the year following we learn that his position was then in the Middle Division of the Fifth Form in the Upper School. As might be

expected, Buller took a delight in manly sports, and we find that in 1855 he was numbered among Eton's "rowing men," being a member of the third College "Eight."

When he was about eighteen, and it became necessary for him to choose a profession, it is not surprising to find that he elected to enter the army, for not only was he a strong, fearless fellow, but it must be remembered that the Crimean War was then an event of yesterday, and nothing was more natural than that a lad of spirit should want to seek his share of such adventure and glory as had fallen to the lot of some of those who went through that terrible campaign. His future friend and companion in arms, Sir Evelyn Wood, had indeed already won his V.C. in that war.

CHAPTER II

First Commission—Story of the 60th—*Celer et Audax*—
First Campaign—In the Far East.

REDVERS BULLER was little more than eighteen years of age when he received his first commission in the army, for he was gazetted on May 23, 1858, as an Ensign in the 60th Regiment, known as the King's Own Rifles. He entered the army, as Sir Evelyn Wood has put it, "just too late for the Indian Mutiny," in suppressing which one battalion of his regiment was actively engaged. And the battalion so engaged was that to which he was appointed, for he joined the 2nd battalion of the 60th at Benares, on what he has recently called one of the luckiest days in his life, in November, 1859. An ensign was at one time the lowest rank of commissioned officer in a regiment of infantry, and the senior ensign

carried the regimental colours ; the name has long since been abolished, officers entering the service now as second-lieutenants—which is, of course, the same rank with another title.

The regiment which the youthful aspirant for military honours had entered was one with a splendid record, and although his actual connection with it only lasted up to the time of his captaincy, it is worthy of note that the distinguished officer has always retained a strong feeling of affection for his old corps, and now, it is said, elects to wear at his dinner parties the green jacket and mess dress of the rifleman.

A brief sketch may fitly be given of the history of the 60th, which was formed during the middle of the eighteenth century for the purpose of increasing the British strength in the northern part of America during the struggle with France for empire in that part of the globe. At the end of 1755 Parliament voted a sum of £81,000 for the purpose of raising a regiment for service in British North America. The new force was originally styled the 62nd, but after a few months this was changed to “ the 60th, or the Royal American

Regiment of Foot," a name that in 1824 when the regiment was made a "British Corps" was changed to "the Duke of York's Own Rifle Corps," and yet later in its history (1830) was changed again to "the 60th, or King's Royal Rifle Corps," the name by which it is now known.

The following are highly interesting facts in connection with the history of this regiment and of its famous motto. The 2nd and 3rd battalions of the 60th, being part of the first English garrison of Quebec, were present in 1759, when the British ensign was hoisted over the Citadel by an officer of the Royal Artillery; and one hundred and twelve years afterwards, in November, 1871, a detachment of the 1st Battalion of the 60th, the remnant of the *last* English garrison of Quebec, consigned the keeping of the Imperial flag to another Artillery officer, whilst the flag of the Dominion of Canada was hoisted over the Citadel in its stead.

It was, indeed, in connection with the fighting that culminated in the capture of Quebec that the regiment won its motto of *Celer et*

Audax (Quick and Courageous) — a motto which we may apply with peculiar aptness to Sir Redvers Buller himself, the most brilliant officer which this famous regiment has produced. It may not be inappropriate to quote here the story of how it was that the 60th won this motto from General Wolfe. “When the operations took place near Montmorency Falls, Montcalm had thrown up an earthwork, a *flèche* open at the gorge, in which he had placed two guns, which flanked Wolfe’s troops and gave great annoyance. Wolfe sent a detachment to take the work, but they were driven back. Wolfe was standing angry and excited at this failure, when an officer of the 60th (whose name unhappily is lost) came up and said he would take the work if the General would allow him to have the two grenadier companies of the 2nd and 3rd battalions of the 60th. Wolfe at first would not listen, but after a little time assented, when the officer with the two companies scouted rapidly by hollow ways and through brushwood, till he got in rear of the *flèche* without discovery, and dashed in at the gorge of the work. The enemy, taken

entirely by surprise, were easily beaten out of the work, the two guns spiked, and the two companies returned rapidly to their own position, when General Wolfe complimented them handsomely on their operation and the way in which it had been executed, and said that their motto in the future should be *Celer et Audax*." ¹

¹ As present Colonel-Commandant of his old regiment, Sir Redvers Buller recently sent the following letter to the *Times* :—

"SIR,—We are compiling the history of the old 60th. Raised in 1755 as the Royal American Regiment, a rifle battalion—the first in the British Army—was added in 1797.

"Any pictures or miniatures showing the dress of the officers of this (5th) rifle battalion at or after 1797, or of any officers or men of the other battalions when made light infantry and dressed in green in 1815–16 will be of great value.

"We shall be most grateful for any information regarding them, or any documents, pictures, badges, or old uniforms of the regiment.

"May I ask any of your readers who can help us to communicate with Major-General Terry, 123, St. George's Road, S.W., who will take the greatest care of any relic he may be permitted either to copy or inspect.

"I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

"REDVERS BULLER,

"Colonel-Commandant of the King's Royal Rifles.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FARNBOROUGH, HANTS,

"September 24th."

Buller joined his regiment, as we have seen, in 1859, when the 2nd battalion was stationed at Benares. The Mutiny had only finally been stamped out at the beginning of the year, and his new comrades had had a busy and distinguished part to play in that terrible tragedy. The young Ensign must have heard at first-hand from his fellow-officers many stories of the days of the Mutiny, and probably regretted that he had joined too late to share in the trials and triumphs of the corps. He had not, however, very long to wait before the opportunity arose for him to have a very fair chance of seeing active service.

England had a serious difference with China—a difference which had culminated in 1857 in a declaration of war. The result of the war had been a treaty which was to have been ratified a year later. In 1859 the English Minister, proceeding to the Chinese capital for the purpose of getting this treaty ratified, was fired upon and war once more became inevitable. France and England joined in the campaign, and the English force was placed under the command of Sir Hope Grant.

From garrison duty in India the 2nd battalion of the King's Royal Rifles were ordered to the Chinese coast to take part in the contemplated attack on Peking, and Ensign Buller, four months after joining his regiment, found before him an immediate prospect of receiving his "baptism of fire." They sailed at the end of February from India for Hong-Kong.

England was determined to have no more Oriental shilly-shallying, and decided to send out a large force to awe and, if necessary, overcome the Celestials. "England has never before opened a campaign with such a well-organised or a more efficient force," so wrote Captain Wolseley who went through the campaign and later wrote its history. During May and June of 1860 a force of 14,000 men of all ranks proceeded from Hong-Kong to the Gulf of Pechili in a hundred and twenty hired transports with "a royal navy force of seventy pennants counting gun-boats."

The King's Own Rifles formed part of the first division under the command of Major-General Sir John Michel, which landed at the end of July. Peh-Tang was taken without

any opposition on August 2nd, and on August 13th Ensign Buller had his first experience of actual warfare when his regiment was used for skirmishing duties at the commencement of the attack on Tang-Ku. A party of soldiers belonging to the 60th had the distinction of being the first to get within the enemy's entrenchments, and we may readily believe that he was to the front among them. A week or so later (August 21st) came the famous capture of the Taku Forts, and again the 60th was in the heat of the action. From Taku the march upon Peking was begun, and a gate of the Chinese capital was surrendered on September 13th, as an earnest of the good faith of the Chinese in declaring themselves ready to make peace.

The young soldier had seen active service, and had seen it under strange conditions in a conflict with the shifty Chinese, who behaved during this campaign in a characteristic fashion, alternately fighting and attempting to stave off the invaders by the true Oriental diplomacy of evasion. The combined Anglo-French expedition had, however, been fitted out for the purpose of making a stable peace, and this

was finally won, but not until the victorious army had reached Peking itself. In this same war had been engaged an officer with whose subsequent career that of Redvers Buller was destined to be closely and honourably linked. Captain Garnet Wolseley went throughout the campaign and wrote, as I have mentioned, a highly interesting history of it, little knowing that young Ensign Buller of the 60th was to form one of his "right-hand men" throughout later campaigns in widely sundered parts of the world.

The Chinese War brought to a successful close and a peace finally arranged, the battalion, which had seen service in both India and China, was at length ordered home in the summer of 1861 and reached England at the end of September. Before the close of the year medals and clasps, in commemoration of the engagements in which it had taken part, were distributed to the battalion, and Ensign Buller became the proud bearer of the Chinese medal with two clasps, indicating that he had taken part in the attack on the Taku Forts and in the subsequent march upon Peking.

There is but little of "story" attached to a young officer's life during the piping times of peace when his men are engaged in garrison duty. A year after the return from the Far East Redvers Buller received his first step on the ladder of promotion, being gazetted Lieutenant on December 9, 1862. In the following year (March 7, 1863) his regiment had the honour of taking part in the demonstration of welcome to the

"Sea-king's daughter from over the sea, Alexandra,"

when she came to her marriage with the Prince of Wales and the new home in which she was destined to win the loving homage of a whole nation. The 60th were posted outside the Bricklayers' Arms Station, where the Princess arrived from Gravesend and where she received the first hearty congratulations of the metropolis.

During the Fenian troubles of the mid-sixties both the 1st and 2nd battalions of the regiment were stationed in Ireland, and in March, 1866, the 1st was transferred to the Mediterranean. Henceforward it was with this

battalion that young Buller was to be connected during the remainder of his regimental service. In 1867 the battalion was again moved, and this time to the country for service in which it had originally been raised over a hundred years before, for in September of that year it was transferred to garrison duty in Canada.

Of the journey to Canada a story is told which may be accepted as an amusing illustration of Buller's readiness in the face of a rebuff. When off the entrance of the St. Lawrence the vessel in which the young Lieutenant and his regiment were voyaging was delayed for some time by long-continued fogs. At length provisions threatened to run short, and a boat, so the story runs, was sent to an islet on which was situated a station for succouring shipwrecked sailors. Lieutenant Buller went with the boat, and he and his companions found the store in charge of a woman who, however, refused to render them any assistance.

"No," she said firmly, "the supplies be for they who'm shipwrecked, not for such as you."

"But this is a Government dépôt, and we are servants of the Crown," insisted Buller.

"Can't help it; you'm not shipwrecked," came the reply.

The young officer caught the slightest suggestive intonation in the woman's last remark, and so at once said, speaking with a Cornish accent—

"What! not for dear old One and All, and I a Buller?"

"What! be yew from Cornwall, en' a Buller? Take everything there is in the place; you'm hearty welcome."

The story capitally illustrates the soldier's ready way of adapting things to suit himself.

Early in the year 1865 Lieutenant Buller lost his father, who died in London on March 5th, at the age of sixty-six. The family estates were inherited by Wentworth Buller's eldest son, our hero's elder brother.

CHAPTER III

Canada — A fresh Expedition — A difficult journey — A bloodless victory.

HAVING been engaged during his first experiences as a soldier on active duty in the Far East, Lieutenant Buller was next to have experiences in the Far West, where in the then but thinly settled districts of what is now known as the Province of Manitoba a serious rebellion had broken out in 1869. The occasion of it was the fact of the North-Western Provinces, as they were then called, having just been transferred to the Dominion Government. The dissatisfied inhabitants were mostly French-Indian half-breeds, known as Bois-Brûlés, who revolted and declared an independent Republic.

Along the Red River—with a centre at Fort

Garry (near the village now grown to be the city of Winnipeg)—there was a little colony then known as the Red River Settlement. It consisted largely of French Canadians and half-breeds, who objected to the transfer of the country from the control of the Hudson's Bay Company to that of the Dominion Government. At length, towards the end of 1869, the opposition grew to such a height that surveying parties were molested and prevented from carrying on their work.

The first man to actively oppose the innovation was the leader of the French half-breeds named Louis Riel, who refused to allow the survey to continue, declaring that the Canadian Government had no right to survey the land which belonged to the French settlers. This opposition caused the surveying party to be withdrawn, and the withdrawal of course encouraged the malcontents, who at once determined to go a step further and prevent the entry of the recently appointed Lieutenant-Governor into the territory. They formed a Provisional Government and elected one of their number, John Bruce, as president, and

the ruling spirit of the whole movement, Louis Riel, as secretary. Riel himself, however, soon became president, and carried things with a high hand. The Lieutenant-Governor was turned back on his arrival, the Hudson Bay Company's fort at Fort Garry was taken possession of, and the disaffected party had it very much their own way for some months. Matters were brought to a head when, having taken some English settlers prisoners, Riel had one of them shot. "After this bloodthirsty display of power, none cared to dispute the authority of Riel, and he ruled the country with a rod of iron."

It soon became obvious to the Canadian Government that a military expedition would have to be sent out—despite the great physical difficulties—to restore the authority of the Queen at the Red River. The sanction of the Home Government was obtained for the employment of Imperial troops in conjunction with the Canadian militia, and Colonel Wolseley (now Commander-in-Chief of the British army), who was then Deputy-Quartermaster-General in Canada, prepared an elaborate report as

to the preparation and equipment of the force.

Lieutenant Buller was at that time with the 1st battalion of his regiment at Ottawa or Toronto, and his battalion, three hundred and fifty strong, formed the greater part of the regular force employed along with about eight hundred of the colonial militia. Toronto became the headquarters of the Expedition, and there the officers were busy for some weeks making the preparations for conveying the members of the Expedition—twelve hundred fighting men, with a large number of boatmen and guides—through a little-known country for a distance of twelve hundred miles. A couple of hundred special boats, twenty-five to thirty feet long, had to be built for the conveying of the troops and their provisions from the top of Lake Superior to the centre of the rebel Riel's "government."

It is difficult to realise the enormous transport difficulties which obtained in Canada nearly thirty years ago, when nowadays the gigantic Canadian Pacific Railway will carry a traveller from the Atlantic to the Pacific

coast in fewer days than it took Colonel Wolseley weeks to get his Expedition half the distance. In 1870 a railroad only took the Expedition but a very small fraction of the journey, from Toronto to Collingwood on the Georgian Bay, a distance of about ninety miles. From Collingwood they were taken to the "Soo" (Sault Ste. Marie) by steamers, and had then to go by portage for three miles to the shores of Lake Superior (for the United States refused to allow the conveyance of military stores through the only canal then made there), whence steamers took them up to Fort William, at the head of the Lake—over five hundred miles from Toronto. Only twelve months ago I passed thus along the route of the Red River Expedition, but where Colonel Wolseley and his followers found themselves in the face of a very wilderness through which they had to make their way for six hundred miles, now we can get on to the Canadian Pacific Railway and be at Fort Garry in a matter of a dozen hours or so.

Very different were the experiences of the Expedition in which Redvers Buller may be

said to have "won his spurs." It was just such an organisation as was fitted to bring out his extraordinary powers, although, as it proved in the sequel, there was no actual fighting—other than that against the obstacles which nature had put in the way. The greatness of these obstacles and the indomitable pluck with which they were overcome can scarcely be imagined by any one who is unacquainted with the country traversed by the Expedition. Rocky, pathless woods, and rapid rivers with frequent falls, made the progress of a large party, and with stores to last for many weeks through a wholly uncultivated country, a matter of the greatest difficulty. The final success of the arrangements by which the force was conveyed to Winnipeg without the loss of a man was a splendid tribute to the organising of the officers and the pluck and perseverance of every member of the party. Through this great tract of rough and broken country Colonel Wolseley carried his Expedition to a successful issue, and where they found nothing but forest and but rarely met with any settlers, towns and villages have been springing up

rapidly ever since the great iron highway which connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans was laid down. Now, were such an expedition needed, it could be taken from Toronto to Winnipeg in fewer days than it then took months.

Nearly three weeks were spent in preparations at Toronto before it was possible to make a forward move. This was done on May 21st, when Colonel Wolseley and the men of the 60th started for Fort William, which was reached on the morning of the 25th, or rather for a place on Thunder Bay five miles from the fort to which Wolseley gave the name of Prince Arthur's Landing, out of compliment to the Duke of Edinburgh, who was then in Canada. It is now known as Port Arthur.

Exactly a week after the start from Toronto had been made Lieutenant Redvers Henry Buller received his promotion on being gazetted a captain, so that he really took part in this Expedition with the higher grade, and was given the command of one of the brigades into which the force was divided. At Thunder Bay the really hard work began; the boats

had to be waited for, the stores had to be got together and divided into "portage"-able packages, and the boats to be fitted with all the necessaries for the long journeying of a large body of men in novel circumstances. Boats, men, and stores, too, had to be conveyed for some considerable distance to Lake Shebandowan. To use the words of another officer of the Expedition, "Lake Shebandowan itself is 800 feet above Lake Superior. It may therefore easily be imagined that rivers flowing from this height into Lake Superior only nine miles off must be very rapid. Up this height the boats had to be dragged, and the stores conveyed; some idea may therefore be gained of the labour involved. The yearly rainfall in this section is great—frightfully great, if the time we spent in this region be any criterion; for during the month of June and up to the 16th of July, when the first brigade of boats left Shebandowan, it rained on fifteen days in June, and on eight out of the sixteen in July." Buller and the other officers, half-stripped for this work, led their men in the energetic preparations, and laboured as strenuously as any.

The difficulties were indeed great and seemed insuperable to all but the most perseveringly hopeful, and even the most optimistic began to doubt whether the Expedition could possibly return before the severe winter set in. But throughout all, says Captain Huyshe, from whose history of the Red River Expedition I have quoted above, the commander was sanguine of ultimate success; and to every question of when would the start be made, replied invariably, "As soon as I have a hundred and fifty boats and two months' provisions at the Lake."

At length the Expedition began to embark at Shebandowan on July 16th, but the official embarkation return only shows sixty-eight boats as taking part, though these were followed later by the boats with the Canadian militia. Captain Buller, with two junior officers, fifty men, and a dozen voyageurs, or boatmen, formed the fifth, or "E" brigade, and they made a start in half a dozen boats on July 17th.

It is impossible to follow in detail the story of that memorable journey through the

wilderness of forest and water which occupied over four weeks. Whenever anybody from the distant settlements was met the cry was always one of "Hurry, hurry! we don't know what may be happening." Officers and men all worked with the greatest good-will at the hardest labour, and Captain Buller was by no means the least notable among these—indeed, those members of the Expedition who have told its history in detail have not failed to note his energy and determination, not only in seeing that his men did their work, but in lending a hand at it himself. And terrible the work must have been, with its almost incessant rowing and the frequent portaging rendered necessary by the many waterfalls. Men had to land, the boats be unloaded, and the packages and boats carried and dragged overland for distances varying from a hundred and fifty yards to two or three miles.

At length, on the 24th of August, the Expedition had won its way through all difficulties, and had reached Fort Garry, but only to find that the leader of the rebels, Louis Riel, "President," had fled precipitately from the

fort on receiving word of the near approach of the Expedition.¹

Colonel Wolseley and the officers and men under him had carried out an extremely difficult piece of work, and had won a bloodless victory, the rebellion which had been so ugly a few months earlier vanishing at the very appearance of the demonstration in force.

Three days later, August 27th, the brigades of Canadian militia began to arrive, and on August 29th the first detachment of the 60th started in the boats to return, the way they had come, *via* the Winnipeg Lake and river. Captain Buller was entrusted with the difficult experiment of getting his company across country to the Lake of the Woods, and acquitted himself admirably, as is shown by the testimony of one of the officers of Colonel Wolseley's staff at the time, who has recorded of Captain Buller : " This officer, by dint of much energy and determination, succeeded in getting his men safely through the swamps. Everything had

¹ It may be noted that in 1885 Louis Riel attempted to head another rebellion in Manitoba, failed, and was executed.

to be carried on pack-horses, which were very lightly laden to enable them to get over the soft, spongy muskegs. The company of the 1st Ontario Rifles, which had been left as a garrison at Fort Frances, met this company of the 60th at the north-west angle, and there exchanged boats and pack-horses."

In bidding farewell to the troops returning to Eastern Canada the commander of the Expedition paid a high tribute to them and to the officers for their behaviour in most trying circumstances :—

"You have endured excessive fatigue in the performance of a service that for its arduous nature can bear comparison with any previous military expedition. In coming here from Prince Arthur's Landing you have traversed a distance of upwards of 600 miles.

"Your labours began with those common at the outset of all campaigns, namely, with road-making and the construction of defensive works ; then followed the arduous duty of taking the boats up a height of 800 feet, along fifty miles of river full of rapids, and where portages were numerous. From the time you

left Shebandowan Lake until Fort Garry was reached your labour at the oar has been incessant from daybreak to dark every day. Forty-seven portages were got over, entailing the unparalleled exertion of carrying the boats, guns, ammunition, stores, and provisions over a total distance of upwards of seven miles. It may be said that the whole journey has been made through a wilderness where, as there were no supplies of any sort whatever to be had, everything had to be taken with you in the boats.

“I have throughout viewed with pleasure the manner in which officers have vied with their men in carrying heavy loads. I feel proud of being in command of officers who so well know how to set a good example, and of men who evince such eagerness in following it.

“It has rained upon forty-five days out of the ninety-four that have passed by since we landed at Thunder Bay, and upon many occasions every man has been wet through for days together.

“There has not been the slightest murmur of discontent heard from anyone.

"It may be confidently asserted that no force has ever had to endure more continuous labour, and it may as truthfully be said that no men on service have ever been better behaved, or more cheerful under the trials arising from exposure to inclement weather, excessive fatigue, and to the annoyance caused by flies. . . ."

That Colonel Wolseley cannot fail to have been impressed by the bravery, strength of purpose, and true soldierly qualities of Captain Buller on this Expedition will be seen in our next chapter.

Captain Buller's regiment on returning to Eastern Canada was quartered at Montreal and Quebec, and then for several years at Halifax, Nova Scotia, but he himself, as we shall see, shortly after got a Staff appointment, and was in many important engagements in which his old regiment was not concerned. He had made a reputation for himself which was destined to grow with every campaign in which he took part. He had not had to take part in actual warfare with the Red River Expedition, but he had had opportunities of

showing those qualities of courage, endurance, and capacity for leadership which are so essential for a military officer. A very strict disciplinarian, he never exacted from others what he was not equal to performing himself when need arose.

CHAPTER IV

On the Staff—The Ashanti War—A responsible position—
Honours and promotion.

IN 1873 Captain Buller was transferred from his regiment, then still stationed in British North America, to the Staff College, and before the year was out he was again selected for active duty. Having served in Asia and in North America, he was now destined to serve in the Dark Continent, with different parts of which his later achievements on active service were destined to be connected. The new war which was to give him fresh employment was one against King Coffee, an Ashanti chieftain who had imprisoned European missionaries, attacked the less warlike Fantis, England's allies, on the West Coast of Africa, and even claimed Elmina, the next

settlement to Cape Coast Castle, and invaded the Gold Coast territory.

There had been petty warfare going on for ten years when the British Government resolved to put a stop to it by sending out an Expedition which, while making use of native troops, should suffice to awe King Coffee into submission and bring about a peace. It was decided that England could not "allow the territories of the tribes in allegiance with Her Majesty to be devastated, the inhabitants butchered or driven away into slavery, and all progress and commerce stopped on the coast by hordes of barbarians."

General Wolseley, who had so distinguished himself in the Red River Expedition, was appointed to the command of the forces to be employed against the Ashantis, and was at the same time appointed governor of the country; and around him, as we shall see, rallied many officers who had served with him in Canada, among them being Captain Redvers Buller.

The terms on which General Wolseley was empowered to make peace are well summarised

from the official instructions by the historian of this war :—

“ A lasting peace is required—and a peace on conditions such as these :

“ A renewed renunciation of the king's rights over the Protectorate and Elmina.

“ The keeping open of paths in Ashanti and promotion of commerce through the interior with the coast.

“ The safe release of the European missionaries.

“ The release of all prisoners taken from the protected tribes.

“ Hostages of distinction given to us.

“ An indemnity for the war expenses, and for the injuries inflicted on our allies.

“ If possible the diminution or cessation of human sacrifices and slave-hunting on the part of the Ashantis.

“ Such terms of peace as these could evidently not be hoped for from an enemy in actual possession of the territory he claimed, stopping all passage to the interior, holding captive not only the European missionaries but hundreds of slaves taken from the Protectorate, living on

the produce of the land he had invaded, and sacrificing Fanti slaves on the death of every chief, unless by giving him an idea of our power to enforce our demands, vastly different from that he must derive by seeing us hemmed in and confined to a narrow strip of seaboard by his victorious troops."

Such were the terms on which General Wolseley was to make peace with King Coffee and his warriors, but he was at the same time given very strongly to understand that, owing to the notoriously bad climate (the Gold Coast is commonly known as "the white man's grave"), he was to be very chary of having recourse to warfare rendering necessary the employment of a large force of British officers and soldiers. The gloomiest forebodings were indulged in in England when the Expedition was arranged; but despite all those forebodings, and despite the deadly nature of the Gold Coast climate, many officers volunteered for service with the young General, who must have been especially pleased at the ready way in which the men who had been on his Staff during the Red River Expedition

offered to enlist under him on his new and unpromising command.

When Wolseley set sail from Liverpool in the steamer *Ambriz*, on September 12, 1873, it must have been particularly gratifying to him to find around him as members of his Staff no fewer than five of his old comrades. Of these the one that here especially interests us is Captain Redvers Buller, to whom was allotted the part of Deputy-Assistant-Quarter-master-General. That this little band of officers consisted of men little likely to be easily discouraged might have been imagined, both from what they had gone through in their efforts to put down the Louis Riel rising, and also from the very fact of their having volunteered for service on the Gold Coast, where malarial fever was known to be a more insidious and more deadly foe than the hordes of barbarian warriors. "Yet even they," as one of their number has recorded, "were dispirited and disgusted long before blue water was reached. Sent to sea in a ship whose berths were being painted twelve hours before they had to be slept in, through whose cabin

floors bilge-water oozed, which was absurdly underhanded for all purposes of attendance, was reeking with foul smells below and flooded above owing to the absence of bulwarks—the passengers in the West African Company's steamship *Ambriz* were as miserable as they could be made. Far from laying in a stock of vigour and energy from the three weeks' voyage, one after another complained that they were being poisoned; and the discomforts suffered in the Bay of Biscay are looked back upon now as exceeding any that the campaign itself induced.”¹

All things come to an end, even a long voyage in an unpleasant ship, and on September 27th the *Ambriz* arrived at Sierra Leone, and Wolseley formally took over the command of her Majesty's forces in the West of Africa settlements. The *Ambriz* then continued the journey, and Cape Coast was reached on October 2nd.

By this time an Ashanti army of about forty thousand men was encamped within four or

¹ “A Narrative of the Ashanti War,” by Henry Brackenbury.

five hours' march either of Cape Coast Castle or of the neighbouring settlement of Elmina. No time was to be lost, and two days after his arrival the commander-in-chief held a reception of all the local kings and chiefs, to whom he explained how it was that he had arrived to help them against their common enemy, and how he must depend upon their loyal assistance in punishing the powerful Ashantis.

We are not here concerned with the story of this war except in so far as it is connected with the life-story of our hero. Captain Buller, I have said, was appointed Deputy-Assistant-Quartermaster-General on Colonel Wolseley's Staff, but to him also was entrusted the onerous position of chief of the Intelligence Department.

In this position Captain Buller set to work with characteristic energy and devotion; he had indeed, as no machinery existed for obtaining any information on the spot, to create an Intelligence Department, and at once entered heart and soul into the difficult task. He began by forming a corps of interpreters for service at headquarters, and with the officers who were told off to act as com-

missioners to the native kings and chiefs—a corps rendered vitally necessary from the fact that the campaign was, if possible, to be fought entirely with native soldiers. Captain Buller left no stone unturned in his efforts to gain trustworthy information from traders or from other people who knew anything of the interior: “by bribes, by promises, and by threats gently administered, he succeeded in learning something from disaffected Elminas. He examined all the Ashanti prisoners previously in captivity or brought in from our outposts; and he set to work to obtain spies from among the Elminas, and from the Assins, the only people capable of speaking Ashanti without betraying themselves as strangers.”

By dint of hard work, sparing neither himself nor others in his zealous greed for necessary information, the indefatigable chief of the Intelligence Department was able to make a useful report to the leader of the Expedition very shortly after they had set to work at Cape Coast. In the course of this report he said:—

“Great endeavours have been made to obtain trustworthy spies and scouts. At Elmina, two

women and a boy have brought some valuable information, and one bold and apparently trustworthy Assin has been of use in the eastern district. Pressure having been put upon the Fanti chiefs, they have sent out numerous scouts in their own districts, but the information thus obtained is for the most part not to be relied upon.

“Many escaped prisoners of the Ashantis have come in, but the information to be obtained from them is most meagre; the constant fear of death under which they have lived seeming to have frightened all memory out of them. No offers, either of gold to the poor, place to the ambitious, or freedom to the prisoners can induce anyone to approach the Ashanti camp, such a step being regarded as certain death.”

This report shows of itself that the chief of the Intelligence Department had by no means a sinecure in his post, but events certainly proved that Captain Buller was the right man for the work. In carrying out the duties of his branch he “exhibited traits of character” to use the words of Mr. (now Sir) Henry M.

Stanley, "which on a more intimate acquaintance with them will prove him not unworthy of filling posts of the most onerous and most responsible nature." How true a prophet was the celebrated war correspondent has been proved over and over again in the quarter of a century which has elapsed since those words were written, and is now being seen anew in South Africa.

By the way, a rather good story occurs in Sir Henry M. Stanley's history of the Ashanti war, apropos of special correspondents. The present Commander-in-Chief (Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley) has always had the reputation of being somewhat averse to newspaper correspondents, and another officer on his Staff seems to have been no less strenuously opposed to them. The blunt outspokenness of his opinions is indeed suggestive that the officer referred to may have been Buller himself. "A gentleman on Sir Garnet Wolseley's staff, during an argument with me relating to this very subject, and who thoroughly shares Sir Garnet's hatred for newspaper men, when it was suggested to him by me that if Sir Garnet in a European

war merely trusted in a correspondent's honour not to mention anything that would furnish information to the enemy, no *gentleman* of the press would disappoint him, blurted out, 'Trust in his honour! By heaven! I would trust to nothing less than his back. On the first publication of anything that I thought not proper, I would tie him to the triangle and trust to fifty lashes well laid on his bare back not to do the like again.'"¹

Shortly after the arrival at Cape Coast Castle it became necessary to destroy one or two villages near Elmina, both to cut off supplies for the enemy's great camp, and to encourage the Fantis (our native allies). A small body of Houssas and soldiers of the West Indian Regiment, a few bluejackets, and some marines, were landed secretly at Elmina on October 14th, and moved towards the village of Essaman. At the moment of landing our hero had a narrow escape from drowning, the boat in which he was carried taking close upon two hours in getting from the ship to the shore, and being very nearly swamped

¹ H. M. Stanley's "Coomassie."

on the way. Captain Buller, who had under his immediate command thirty native labourers armed with axes to help clear the narrow path through the bush, was the first to penetrate through and get a glimpse of the village. The native troops began by firing wildly, and indicated something of the difficulty, if not the impossibility of keeping to the British Government's instructions of carrying the war through without any large force of white troops. The enemy opened a heavy fire, but despite this General Wolseley's object was at length gained and Essaman destroyed, though not without several casualties. The Colonel on the Staff was badly wounded, and Captain Buller took his place, while Buller himself had a narrow escape, a slug penetrating the leather case in which he carried his compass and damaging the instrument. Besides Essaman two other villages were destroyed, and the commander of the Expedition became convinced of the necessity of employing white troops, and also learned something of the power of endurance which such troops possessed in this supposed deadly land. His men had had to march

twenty-one miles through a very densely grown country, under a burning sun, and after having been up all night—yet there were but two cases of sunstroke.

Shortly after this brief tentative expedition to Essaman Captain Buller fell a victim to the scourge of the West African climate, and suffering from a sharp attack of malarial fever had to be removed to H.M.S. *Simoon*, which was stationed off the coast as a hospital ship. More fortunate than some others, Captain Buller pulled through the sickness in a short time, and was soon back at his post, the duties of which, during his period of enforced absence, had been performed by Captain (now General Sir) William F. Butler, who had just arrived from home as a special service officer at the time that Buller was stricken down. Captain Butler, it may be added, had performed distinguished service in the Far West, supplementary to that of the Red River Expedition.

Captain Buller was one of the first of the officers to penetrate to the river Prah—the Rubicon between Cape Coast and Coomassie, and a ghastly sight it was which met his eyes

along the "road." The original pathway, for it was nothing more, had been widened by the passage of the Ashanti hosts which retired on their own country as the British Expedition advanced; dead bodies lay on the wayside and sometimes in the middle of the path—bodies often of slaves sacrificed to the local fetish that it might keep back the English force; at every mile or so, too, there were clusters of foul-smelling huts. "Like some monster of fable the Ashanti army dragged itself homeward to its lair, wounded and weary, leaving behind it a loathsome trail of filth and blood." This gruesome path had to be widened, and in marshy places to be levelled up and streams to be bridged before an attack could be contemplated upon King Coffee's stronghold. By the end of December, 1873, it could be announced that the main route to the Prah River was reopened; that it was once again the "Queen's highway," no longer a mere bush track, but a broad and spacious road with firm tracks across the marshes and bridges across the rivers.

The campaign was indeed one beset with many difficulties, the most serious being those

encountered by the Intelligence and Transport Departments. Roads had to be made, carriers had to be employed by many hundreds over and over again, and from distant districts, and even then they disappeared as rapidly by desertions as they were secured. Bit by bit, however, the requisite information was acquired, and then as reinforcements arrived from England a move forward could be made. The Headquarters Staff dined together for the last time at Cape Coast Castle on Christmas Day, most of them starting on the road to Coomassie on the following day and the rest of them with General Wolseley on December 27th. The march lay through a country covered with the densest forest and undergrowth which, beautiful as it was when first seen, became, as one who attended the Expedition has recorded, horribly depressing in its terrible monotony: "One may travel for hours in the forest without hearing a sound ; for days without seeing anything larger than an insect. It is the absence of sunlight and of that vegetation which requires much sunlight nourishment, which causes this dearth of life."

At the end of January came the first pitched fight with the enemy at the Battle of Amoaful when, after a very trying struggle, the British officers had the satisfaction of knowing themselves to be victorious. General Wolseley had planned carefully, and his Staff worked with untiring courage and zeal; Captain Buller, says one describer of the battle, being kept trotting backwards and forwards with orders and reports until it was feared that he would over-exert himself in the strenuous work. At length, however, courage and zeal had its reward, and the day was won.

In making his report to the War Office, it is interesting here to note that the commander named Captain Buller as being one of those officers from whom he had received the most valuable assistance.

After the first day's serious fighting at Amoaful—the first of the five days which led up to the capture of Coomassie—the white troops and native irregulars were led forward to Jarbinbah, where but slight resistance was offered, the advanced guard succeeding in dislodging the enemy. Captain Buller accom-

panied the advanced guard, which left Amoaful at daybreak on February 2nd, and briefly reported to his chief from Jarbinbah as follows, at half-past eight the same morning : " Adwabin next. The guide is so positive that Ashantis would be gathered at Adwabin, at the meeting of the Becqua Road, that I go on to tell Colonel M'Leod. At present rate of advance we shall be at Adwabin by noon. The Brigadier [Sir Archibald Alison] has authorised Colonel M'Leod to put the Rifle Brigade in front, as latter complained of excessive waste of ammunition by Russell's Regiment [composed of natives]. Colonel M'Leod estimates the force driven hence at 1,000—they fled west."

The estimate proved to be incorrect, for it was after noon when the advanced guard arrived at the village of Aggemmamu, little more than half way to Adwabin. From that place Captain Buller returned to report to General Wolseley, and was sent still further back to Amoaful to bring up the convoy. The energetic head of the Intelligence Department was thus kept busily at it—covering the road

to Coomassie twice over in effect. At the next brush with the enemy, at Ordahai, Captain Buller had the misfortune to be wounded—although but slightly, for he was able to take part in the final march on and capture of Coomassie, and in the release of a large number of King Coffee's intended victims, and was well enough to sit up all through the night performing the somewhat exacting duties of a prize agent—taking note of the valuable "loot" which fell into the hands of the Expedition.

But a brief stay was made in the "capital" of Ashanti, and then began the return to the coast. The purpose for which the Expedition set out had been accomplished. King Coffee had signed a treaty of peace, and it behoved those responsible for the British members of the force to get them away from the fatal climate of the West Coast of Africa with as little delay as possible.

On the close of the campaign the commander of the Expedition sent a full report to the Secretary of State for War, in which he warmly eulogised his Deputy-Assistant-Quartermaster-General in the following words:—

“ The duties of the Intelligence Department were most efficiently performed by Captain Buller, D.A.Q.M.G. He is an excellent Staff officer. I am much indebted to him for the information of the enemy's doings that he supplied me with throughout the war. The extensive knowledge he acquired of the native tribes both in Ashanti and the territories allied to us, was invaluable to me in my dealings with the kings and chiefs.”

When Cape Coast Castle was reached, on February 19th, and before the officers and men began to sail for home, the “loot” from Coomassie was displayed in the local Transport Office previous to being sold—the proceeds being divided up as prize-money. Captain Buller was one of the three prize agents, as I have said, and he and his colleagues having arranged their stores with considerable taste, these were left “on view” for a day and then the sale began. The natives were the chief bidders for the stuffs and beads, but when the gold objects and curios were sold Captain Buller, who was perched on a table as auctioneer, found his fellow-officers keenly

competing for their possession. The loot sale realised between three and four thousand pounds.

Buller returned to England with Wolseley and his Staff in the steamship *Manitoba*, which arrived at Spithead on March 20, 1874. An enthusiastic reception awaited all who had taken part in the war, and who, despite all croaking prognostications, had brought it to a successful termination, with a list of casualties which was, all the circumstances considered, not a heavy one. On the last day of March all the officers and troops were inspected by her Majesty the Queen at Windsor, and Major Redvers Buller—for he was now promoted—received the decoration of a Companion of the Bath. On the evening of the same day the officers of the Expedition were all entertained at a great civic banquet by the Lord Mayor of London.

On April 8th the good people of Crediton gave a cordial welcome home to Major Buller, when he was presented with a congratulatory address upon his achievements and upon his safe return. In reply the soldier made a brief

speech, in which he thanked the inhabitants of Crediton very much for the kind welcome which they had given him. Such an address as they had been pleased to present him with would be valuable to him coming as it did from friends and neighbours, men of the parish in which he was born. Travelling, as he had been, in almost every part of the world, he had never seen men that hung together so well as the men of Devonshire. He remembered that it had been said that

“When good Queen Bess
Got in a mess,
She sent for a Devonshire man.”

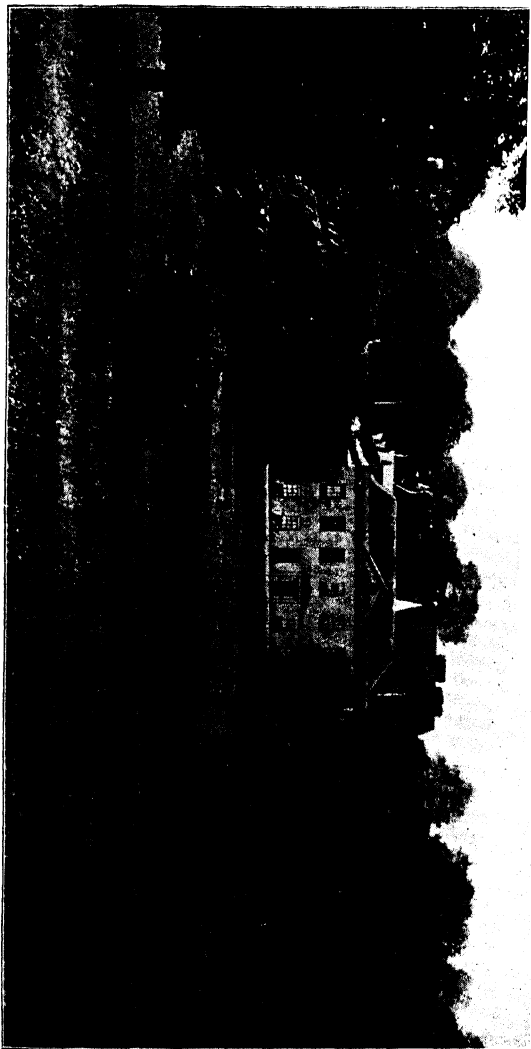
Sir Garnet Wolseley was allowed to select his own Staff, and three out of the four officers he took were Devonshire men, two of whom, he was happy to say, had lived to return. It had been stated in some of the papers that the war was a very iniquitous one, and ought never to have been entered into. All he could say was that he was perfectly shocked with the sight that met his eyes on entering Coomassie. Headless men were strewed in the roadway to impede the progress of the troops. It chanced

to be his luck to release the prisoners whom he found, about fifty in number, tied to trees in a place about twenty feet square, perfectly naked, half starved, and waiting every minute to be beheaded. They released them not without some difficulty, because the poor fellows hung around their necks in order to express their gratitude for their timely deliverance. If nothing else had been done, he thought this was a sufficient compensation for the trouble that had been taken and the expense that had been incurred.

CHAPTER V

Inherits Downes—Life in Devonshire—Appointment at Headquarters—The Kafir War—Buller's Light Horse.

ON October 13, 1874, Major Buller, on the death of his eldest brother, who had never married, inherited the family estates of Downes, near Crediton, and Cowick and Hayes Barton, near Exeter, of both of which places he became lord of the manor. Thenceforward, during such intervals as he has been allowed, he has spent as much time as possible on his estates, where, it may surprise some people to learn, he has an enthusiasm for farming, counting among his "hobbies" agriculture and stock-raising. He is said to indulge in these hobbies with characteristic thoroughness, and to have a sound judgment on crops, horses, and cattle. He is said too—and this also is



DOWNES, CREDITON, THE HOME OF SIR REDVERS BULLER

eminently characteristic of the man—always to maintain that the products of his land are unrivalled, and that he has some grounds for priding himself on the subject is proved by the frequency with which products of his estate have figured in the prize lists of agricultural shows.

Our interest, however, centres in him more as a military “man and leader of men” than as a country gentleman, and we find that he took a further step up the ladder of promotion in the year after his return from the West Coast of Africa, when he was chosen for the post of Deputy-Assistant-Adjutant-General, the first of many responsible War Office appointments which he was to hold. In the office, as in the field, he soon got a reputation with those with whom he was brought into contact, of being a “thorough” man—one who, if he gives an order, expects to see it performed as rapidly and as efficiently as can be. Many people indeed give him the character of being a severe man—a disciplinarian of the sternest type, but if he be so he is only severe where severity is called for, and

that is how it is that he has been noted for the ready and admiring obedience which those under him have shown. This trait, as we shall see, was especially brought into prominence when he had the difficult task of organising and leading the body of irregular cavalry known as the Frontier Light Horse, which played so brilliant a part in the Kafir and Zulu Wars.

Early in 1878 the Kafir rebellion, or the rebellion of the Gaika and Galeka tribes under the old chief Sandilli, assumed such threatening proportions in South Africa, that a number of British troops, as well as Colonial irregulars and levies of friendly natives, were employed in putting it down. Major Buller, whose *fidus achates*, Colonel Evelyn Wood, was engaged in it, volunteered his help, and reached Natal in April, 1878, "on special service." He at once took command of the Frontier Light Horse, a body that had been originally raised by an officer of the 24th Regiment, but which was henceforward, for a couple of years, to be closely identified with the fortunes of Redvers Buller. The corps which

had always been a good one, became a remarkably efficient body of men under the inspiring control of its new leader. No detail was too small to claim Buller's attention, no work too hard which tended to the improvement of his force, and it has been recorded that he would spend hours in getting saddles that properly fitted the horses so as to prevent any danger of sore backs. To what a pitch of excellence he brought this corps is not only seen in the records of this Kafir War during the first half of 1878, but also in the more serious Zulu War, which broke out a few months later. Testimony to the usefulness of the corps and to the prestige which it got under Buller's guidance is found in the fact that when he took it over it numbered but about a couple of hundred men, whereas while under his command he brought the number up to close upon eight hundred. A friendly pen has left an account of the appearance and equipment of the body that came to be known as Buller's Light Horse, and that description is especially interesting at the present time, when similar bodies of Colonial horsemen are actively

employed in the war in which Sir Redvers Buller is now engaged over parts of the same country as that in which he distinguished himself twenty years ago.

The first requisite of Buller's Horse was a well-built, sober, and intelligent horseman, who, in addition to being able to shoot with the Martini-Henry, knew also how to groom, saddle, and nurse his steed. This was required to be an animal neither leggy, long-tailed, nor showy, but a clever cobby sort of quadruped, who could climb like a cat, and obey its master like a well-broken spaniel, endowed with a sound constitution, stout and wiry, and with a good turn of speed. The saddlery was, as far as possible, of a uniform pattern, and selected with considerable judgment and care. The great points were that the tree should be wide enough in the fork not to pinch the shoulders, but yet not so wide as to let the saddle right down on the withers, with the seat long enough to sit in comfortably, and to spread the weight to some extent over the horse's back. As many of the Cape horses are buck-jumpers, slightly padded

flaps were in vogue, although not insisted upon. They are a great protection to the knees in riding through bush. The saddle, of course, was provided with wallets in front, which contained a couple of pairs of socks, one flannel shirt, a toothbrush, towel, and piece of yellow soap. Saddle-bags were worn only when going on distant expeditions, but a tin mug, knife, fork, and spoon, revolver, and flint and steel formed the invariable equipment of these troopers, and with a cloak or blanket *à discrétion* made up the weight carried by the horse. Although the mounted infantry were volunteers drawn from various line regiments, there was sufficient leaven of the cavalry element to insure efficiency in the mounted duties. When the corps was first raised any kind of dress was worn, but fashion subsequently exerted its sway and a rather picturesque "get up" became almost universally adopted. Broad-leaved felt hats, with coloured puggarees, brown cord breeches, "baggy" to the last degree, and so patched with untanned leather that the original material had almost disappeared; a sort of patrol jacket,

all over pockets, dyed mimosa colour, and also patched with leather of any colour on the shoulders, and wherever the gun was accustomed to rest, brown laced gaiters coming high up the leg, and even thighs, and a rough coloured flannel shirt, entirely open at the neck : such was the most usual costume. The rifles were of various patterns—long Martinis, Martini-Henry carbines, some of Sharpe's old pattern Sniders and Snider carbines.

Such, so far as words will describe it, was the outward appearance of the Frontier Light Horse as organised by Major Redvers Buller. Not perhaps showy as regards equipment, but eminently serviceable and equal to any amount of unvarying hard work ; and for such work it was destined to win a high character. Buller's Light Horse became imbued with something of the endurance and something of the unswerving courage of the officer commanding them. " He was a splendid worker, and never seemed to tire, however great the amount of hard work ; and wherever the stiffest place was he was sure to be found. In action, if you could ascertain for certain where most

bullets were flying, you would be pretty safe in reckoning that Buller would be in the middle of it." So said Mr. F. N. Streatfield, a magistrate on the Kaffrarian border, who commanded a body of Fingoes (*i.e.*, friendly Kafirs) during the war, and whose story of how he first met Buller is well worth repeating, for it gives some idea of the life then experienced by the leader of the Frontier Light Horse. Streatfield, too, it may be mentioned, was an old Eton boy of Buller's time at school, though they had not known each other then, being in widely separated classes.

When Streatfield had sent a message to Major Buller, he found that his messenger was the only man who knew the way to where the Frontier Light Horse were encamped, and as he and his men had to proceed to join them in the dark, and to travel through a "bush" that might be thick with hidden Kafirs, he had not an easy task, but he succeeded in accomplishing it. How he did so, and the story of his meeting with his old but hitherto unknown schoolfellow, may best be given in his own words: "We lost the path innumerable times

when in the open, and the whole column had to halt while the leading men 'felt' for it. Thus we got on slowly, slowly, till I was almost beginning to think it was a hopeless case, and that we really should never find Major Buller's camp before daylight came. However, at length, to my inexpressible relief, we saw the reflection of a fire in the distance, and on getting up a bit found it was made by some of the Frontier Light Horse, and that Buller himself was close by. This fire had been made in a hollow, and was totally invisible to any one down in the forest. Buller soon heard my voice, and came to meet me. There were men, rolled in their blankets, lying all over the place, and with great difficulty and circumspection I picked my way to him, not, however, without coming a most frightful cropper over one man, whom, I trust, I did not hurt. I was warmly congratulated by Buller on having completed our march successfully, for he knew what sort of a time we must have had. I had told the men to lie down where they were for the few remaining hours, before we moved down to the plateaus, for it was already twelve o'clock.

“Buller was sharing a patrol tent with Captain M’Naghten of the Frontier Light Horse, and asked me to crawl in between them, which I was only too glad to do, being miserably cold and wet. I got in quickly, and did not wake M’Naghten. Poor fellow ! little did I think as I lay beside him that night that he was having his last sleep in this world ! The next night his body was being taken into King William’s Town on a bullock waggon with some other men, shot in the attack of the day that was already begun.”

The men were situated on a plateau and were about to make a third attack on the Kafir stronghold of the Perie. Before dawn Major Buller was up and roused his men of the Light Horse, and they and the Fingoes whom Commandant Streatfield had brought with him were soon beginning to move. The attack was a daring one, for it was on a plateau known to be crowded with the enemy, and it was hoped to dislodge them by a rush. The Kafirs had, however, shifted their ground, and had got among a lot of scattered rocks at the edge of the bush, whence, from places of comparative

safety they could shoot the attackers. Captain M'Naghten, mentioned above, was one of the first to fall, shot instantly dead, while another captain of the same corps fell directly afterwards severely wounded. Buller and a fellow-officer at once headed a few white volunteers and Fingoes, and in the most dashing manner rushed right in among the rocks, and getting under the same cover close to the Kafirs, shot many of them down and put the rest to flight by sheer daring, for their numbers were vastly inferior to the enemy. Two men were shot during the rush, and Buller himself had a very narrow escape. Thus the fighting went on for a whole day, and before the next night was more than half through the troops had to be at it again for fear the lurking enemy should still be in the neighbourhood, anywhere in the dense "cover" of the bush. During this day, too, Commandant Streatfield managed to sprain his ankle rather severely, and the accident brought out a fresh trait in the character of the indefatigable leader of the Frontier Light Horse, for to use the words of the officer whom he befriended, "Buller

most kindly rushed about and worked like a brick with my men, making me feel quite jealous of the masterly way in which he came out as a Fingo leader, and showing clearly that his practice with the natives in Ashanti had not been thrown away."

The leader of the Kafir rebels was, as I have already said, the Gaika chief Sandilli—an old man who, it may be added, had been actively concerned in two earlier rebellions. News reached Buller of the supposed whereabouts of Sandilli, and he at once devised a bold scheme for routing him out of his stronghold in the rocky side of a mountain in the Perie forest. His scheme was neither more nor less than to march during the early night and sleep in the "bush" on the very ground most frequented by the enemy. A bold leader rarely wants for bold followers, and not only the Frontier Light Horse but the native contingent of Fingoes readily followed the hazardous plan. The camping-place reached, parties of Fingoes were sent to discover the "spoor" (*i.e.*, footmarks) of the Kafirs, and these were ultimately found to lead to an

absolutely impregnable position, where, entirely hidden from attack, the enemy could shoot every man who approached the entrance to their retreat through the piled-up rocks.

Not to be foiled, and conscious that the capture of Sandilli would mean the collapse of the war, Buller sent for further reinforcements from the neighbouring camp, so that the place might, so far as the nature of the country would permit, be completely surrounded. Buller and one party stayed at the top of the precipitous rock during the following night, at the spot where the traces of the Kafirs' feet showed that they had descended where a chamois might have hesitated. Lying on a flat rock the officer and his men waited in vain for any sign of the enemy, and in the morning joined the party guarding the foot of the place. Not a sign of the enemy could be seen, and an old prisoner was sent forward as a "feeler."

He was watched anxiously by the English officers and their men for a while, but at length Buller's impatience got the better of his discretion, and he exclaimed—

“ Oh, hang it ! let's go and take our chance.”

Forward he and his companion officers went, followed closely by their men. Scrambling and climbing, now over, now under, the piled-up rocks, “ making progress at about a yard a minute ” towards the narrow inlet, the foolhardy storming party were somewhat astonished at receiving no volley of shot by way of welcome. The secret was soon out. What had appeared to be the face of the precipice was only the face of a great rock-fall, between which and the cliff itself was a narrow hidden passage through which the besieged Kafirs had during the night-time “ silently stolen away.”

It had been a bold stroke, but an unsuccessful one, and Buller and those under his command had to return to their camp and hope for better luck next time. Several days were spent in “ beating ” the forest for the enemy who, however, had been effectually dislodged. Two or three days were spent in King William's Town, and then back to camp again, where, however, for some weeks, there was little but routine work to be done, the Kafirs having totally disappeared from the district. Then

news of Sandilli's death was received during the early summer, so that the war was practically over. This being so, in June Major Buller was ordered to proceed north to Natal, leaving the English officers of the native levies to regret the absence of a kindly chief and a cheery friend who, as one of them has recorded, added greatly to the usually scant comfort and happiness of camp life with the Fingoes.

The Kafir War had been a short one, and Major Buller had only had about three months' work in it when he received these orders to proceed further north, where matters were ripening for the Zulu War. Indeed a conflict with Cetewayo and his people seemed inevitable, and it was only by the exercise of great tact on the part of Sir Theophilus Shepstone that the peace was kept until the Kafir rebellion was over. Lord Chelmsford, who had commanded in Kaffraria, was busy in Natal preparing against a possible invasion of the colony by the Zulus, and also preparing, if need should arise, to carry the war into the enemy's country. Major Buller's experience of three months'

roughing it after Kafirs in the bush was to stand him in good stead in the more formidable task on which he was about to enter, while the practice he had had in the organisation and manipulation of the Frontier Light Horse was to make that body an invaluable auxiliary in the approaching conflict.

CHAPTER VI

The Zulu War—Promotion—With Sir Evelyn Wood—
Some brilliant actions—The Mount of Valour—A well-
earned V.C.

THE Zulu War of 1879 introduces us to a particularly interesting period in Buller's career, for it was in one of the actions of that war that he gave such remarkable evidence of his great personal courage as won for him the coveted honour of the Victoria Cross, and also of his ability as a leader in being able to remove his men with the minimum of loss from a terrible position where the slightest hesitation on his part would have meant the annihilation of his force at the hands of a savage enemy.

During the autumn of 1878, while they were preparing for eventualities, Redvers Buller

received further promotion, being gazetted a colonel on November 11th.

When troubles first arose between the British South African Colonies and Zululand during 1878, and Cetewayo—to employ the generally accepted spelling of his name—proved truculent, it finally became necessary for the defence of Natal to adopt an offensive policy and to invade Zululand. In December, the British demands were formulated and the Zulu King was given until the last day of the year to comply with them; a further “ultimatum” was sent in the beginning of January, and no satisfaction being obtainable armed action became inevitable. Lord Chelmsford was in command of the British forces, which he divided into four columns, each of which, while acting independently, was to keep in touch with those nearest to it. The extreme left column was placed under the command of Colonel Evelyn Wood, V.C., and part of his force consisted of the Frontier Light Horse, then about two hundred strong, under Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel Buller, to give him his official designation at the time.

The headquarters of the left column were at Utrecht, the most southerly town in the Transvaal, and near the point where that country joins both Natal and Zululand. From here the force moved on September 7th with the object of getting sufficiently near to Rorke's Drift to support the next column in the event of an expected Zulu attack. After encamping at Sandspruit, Wood's entire force—all but a small guard left behind—paraded in the lightest possible order early in the afternoon of September 10th, and marched for four hours, when a halt was made until an hour and a half after midnight, "when by the light of a glorious moon the advance was pursued." A short halt was made at three o'clock, when a reconnaissance was ordered in which Buller's Horse took a principal part. By eight o'clock this advanced body was comfortably encamped within ten miles of Rorke's Drift; they then returned ten miles to the main body and encamped. Within twenty-four hours the men had marched thirty-one miles, but were not long to enjoy the comfort of the camp, for when they were settled for the evening a

sudden thunderstorm of terrific force broke over them. Tent-poles snapped and tents collapsed, and in a quarter of an hour the men were up to their ankles in water.

Such unpleasantnesses were, however, the mere incidents of campaigning, and could not be allowed to interfere with any of the serious work in hand, and soon after daybreak next morning (12th) Buller paraded a patrol of his men and took them out, reports having come in from scouts that great numbers of cattle were in the neighbourhood, and the enemy, presumably, not far off. Shortly after they had left the camp they were fired on, but the Zulus did not hold their ground, and the patrol brought in a herd of nearly a thousand head of cattle. Thus they moved forward with occasional skirmishes for several days, until General Wood was forced to return towards the Umbolosi River by the news which reached him of the terrible disaster which had overtaken the third column at Isandhlwana. Another column was rendered inactive by being forced to remain in camp at Ekowe, and Wood's was in fact the only available force for

some time which could act on the offensive. For several days there was marching and counter-marching without any meeting with the enemy in force. At length, when encamped at a place called Kambula, the commanding officer decided to raid a kraal thirty miles away, known as one of the chief rallying-points of the Zulus and as having large quantities of supplies for their army.

The story of this raid admirably illustrates Buller's quiet daring where the opportunity occurs for an adventure of some moment. At four o'clock on the morning of February 1st he selected 106 of the best mounted men from his Frontier Light Horse and thirty-three of the Dutch Contingent under Commandant Piet Uys, and paraded them before the leader of the column. Before starting Buller straightforwardly explained to his troop the details of the feat which they were about to attempt, without in any way seeking to minimise the danger which they would necessarily incur in the performance of an extremely difficult and hazardous duty. The scene is said to have been a most dramatic one, as the camp lanterns

lit up the faces of the bronzed and stalwart volunteers who formed the devoted band. "Each man was exceedingly well horsed," say the historians of the Zulu campaign, "and no precaution had been neglected in the careful overhauling of arms, accoutrements, and saddlery. Biscuit and, for those who cared, a little ration of rum were served out, and with a hearty 'God-speed' from their comrades, who half envied their chances of adventure, the little troop of 141 gallant fellows started long before the earliest streak of dawn. The utmost silence was ordered and maintained, while the ground for some miles was so favourable that the horses' hoofs were scarcely heard as they cantered over the light and springy veldt. Distances on horseback are so differently estimated out in South Africa and at home in England, that when the ground is favourable, very long, and to European experience almost impossible, marches are constantly made without distress to horse or rider. In the present instance two short off-saddles only were indulged in ; the first not far from the centre of the flat, and the

next after the Mangana River had been safely crossed. The country now became more broken and the pace was reduced to a walk, but before the sun was well up the goal was in sight, and the herds of cattle were seen calmly feeding on the slopes. No suspicion would seem to have been excited, and it is more than probable that the very smallness of the attacking force, and its being all composed of the mounted branch, contributed to the success of the affair. The kraal was exceedingly well built, and, seen from a distance of 1,200 or 1,000 yards, it was doubtful whether it held a large guard or not. Cautiously, yet swiftly advancing, Colonel Buller felt his way, with a few of his best shots thrown out as vedettes. These men soon encountered some scattered Zulus, who did not seem at all prepared for any hostile demonstration, but on retiring towards the hills they were reinforced by several other larger bodies, who had evidently been sent out to reconnoitre. After a few shots had been fired a sudden and simultaneous advance was made on two sides of the kraal, and almost without resistance on the part of its defenders the kraal was captured.

Two hundred and fifty well-built huts were counted by Buller's men, who, losing not a moment, collected no less than four hundred head of cattle, and a large quantity of grain, and then set fire to the magazine. Six Zulus were killed in the capture of the place, and although more than one body of them were seen hovering about in the vicinity, numbering severally 100 to 200 and 300 men, no opposition was offered to the rearguard or patrols."¹

The pluck of Buller and his men, aided by the panic which seems to have possessed the defenders of the kraal, combined to make the raid remarkably successful. And, indeed, the actual attack was made with a considerably diminished force, because the situation of the kraal, in the centre of a basin surrounded by precipitous hills, rendered it necessary for Buller to leave a material part of his force, thirty men, to guard the pass by which they had come through the hills. The party returned to their comrades at Kambula without having met with any casualty. At Kambula a strongly en-

¹ "The Story of the Zulu Campaign," by Major Waller Ashe and Captain the Hon. E. V. Wyatt Edgell.

trenched camp was formed, and from it during February and the early part of March several small expeditions were sent out in most of which Buller and his Light Horse played an important part. Although for some time they met with but little opposition from the enemy, they succeeded in capturing large numbers of cattle, and in several of these excursions the leader of the Frontier Light Horse gave fresh evidence of his indomitable endurance, his courage and resourcefulness.

Another particularly noteworthy sortie of a similar character undertaken by Colonel Buller, and carried out with complete success, calls for mention. At ten o'clock at night, on March 14th, a strong detachment of the Frontier Light Horse, along with fifty of the mounted Transvaal Volunteers under Piet Uys, paraded "without lights, bugles, or the slightest sound, and moved off silently into the bush, without even the jingle of a sabre or the clank of a chain," from Colonel Wood's camp at Kambula with the object of destroying the great military kraal of Manyanyoba—a kraal which the Zulu King, Cetewayo, and his chiefs considered as

one of the safest of their strongholds. Colonel Buller took a gun with him, but before setting out had its wheels carefully swathed in cloth and raw hide to prevent any sound and as a protection against rocky parts of the journey. The gun was got into position and the leader sent his Frontier Light Horse forward on the left with instructions to remain in the bush until they heard the shelling of the kraal, when they were to rush out and secure what cattle there might be, driving them round to Piet Uys and his Boers. Just as the sun rose two shells were fired from the gun, and the second burst right in the centre of the kraal where the cattle were kept. The frightened Zulus fled, but once on the mountain-side turned and fired at their attackers, though without inflicting any serious damage. The little expedition was entirely successful, and Buller not only destroyed the formidable military centre but took some four hundred head of cattle back to camp, having successfully managed the retreat to headquarters despite the fact that the Zulus were rapidly and numerous reinforced.

At about this time an incident happened at a

place some thirty miles from Sir Evelyn Wood's camp, which, although not directly connected with our hero's life-story, is interesting as illustrating his views no less strongly than those of his chief at the time. A convoy of about seventy soldiers with a number of waggons bound for Luneberg had halted for the night at a point about ten miles away, part of the convoy being on either side of the "drift," or fording-place. Suddenly, at four o'clock in the morning, the enemy, four or five thousand strong, fell on the camp and assailed the greater number of the men. A lieutenant in command, his captain being one of the first to fall, mounted and galloped off to Luneberg for reinforcements, leaving his men to their fate. He was subsequently court-martialled for having gone off on the only horse, leaving his men engaged in a desperate engagement. The court found him "not guilty," but the General commanding, on the proceedings being submitted to him, endorsed them "disapproved and not confirmed," the officer "to be released from arrest, and to return to his duty."

If that were all of the painful incident it

would not have called for notice here, but in refusing to confirm the verdict Lord Chelmsford recorded his reasons as follows, and his words were subsequently approved by the Commander-in-Chief and ordered to be read at the head of every regiment in her Majesty's service : " Had I released this officer without making any remarks upon the verdict in question it would have been a tacit acknowledgment that I concurred in what appears to me a monstrous theory, viz., that a regimental officer who is the only officer present with a party of soldiers actually and seriously engaged with the enemy can, under any pretext whatever, be justified in deserting them, and by so doing abandoning them to their fate. The more helpless the position in which an officer finds his men, the more it is his bounden duty to stay and share their fortune, whether for good or ill. It is because the British officer has always done so that he occupies the position in which he is held in the estimation of the world, that he possesses the influence he does in the ranks of our army. The soldier has learnt to feel that, come what may, he can, in the direst moment

of danger, look with implicit faith to his officer, knowing that he will never desert him under any possible circumstances. It is to this faith of the British soldier in his officers that we owe most of the gallant deeds recorded in our military annals; and it is because the verdict of this court-martial strikes at the root of this faith that I feel it necessary to mark officially my emphatic dissent from the theory upon which the verdict has been founded."

It is easy to believe that General Buller would cordially endorse every word of that statement made by Lord Chelmsford; indeed, in all too few weeks he was to have a somewhat similar incident immediately under his notice—and an incident which brought from him, as we shall see, much more bluntly emphatic language than that used in Lord Chelmsford's report.

One more of Colonel Buller's important expeditions, from the Kambula camp, somewhat similar to those already mentioned, calls for some description. A brother of Cetewayo's, Oham (or Uhama), had come in and submitted, with three or four hundred of his men, to General

Wood, and had begged that his wives and family might be rescued before they could fall into the hands of the King. Twenty of Oham's men were sent off to collect them, and then, on March 14th, Buller set out once more before daybreak, but with a larger body than usual, consisting of a strong detachment of his own Frontier Horse, a number of the Boer Volunteers under Piet Uys, with a couple of hundred of Oham's men. Sir Evelyn Wood, it may be mentioned, accompanied the party. A member of the Expedition has left us a graphic account of the ride to the caves of Nhlangwine, where the chief's wives and family (and, incidentally, cattle) were collected. These caves were no less than forty-five miles away from the camp, yet Colonel Buller succeeded in his enterprise, and got back to Kam-bula in safety with close upon a thousand of Oham's people in little more than fifty hours. "They rode along for a considerable time in complete silence, the men being allowed to smoke their pipes, but not to speak above a whisper. At first they followed the spoor of some cattle, which indicated the road by which

Oham and his people had come to the camp, and then, turning more in a northerly direction, followed the course of some small streams which flowed from the hills upon the left. The moon shone brightly, and enabled them to see clearly for some distance before them. Many strange sounds were heard—the growl of some beast of prey, or the scream of the night-birds disturbed by the clank of the horses' hoofs, or the occasional rattle of a chain. The rapidity with which the column cantered over the soft and springy veldt, the dead and ominous silence maintained by all hands, and the steady and business-like mode in which they pursued their course, neither turning to the right nor to the left, gave the journey a singularly weird character. As soon as the first morning's light began to appear the guides, who rode in front, turned into a ravine covered with dense brushwood and trees, and having ascended this for about three miles, they found it was possible to ride out of it in three different directions, besides the one by which they had entered, and thus a retreat could be effected if any attack were made. Here it was decided to make the

first off-saddle and partake of breakfast. At a signal from their leader, and without any word of command, the horsemen dismounted, slackened girths, and took off saddles, while the bits were removed from the horses' mouths and the animals allowed, Cape fashion, to take the customary roll in the grass. This luxury to a Cape horse seems indispensable, and without it he will rarely enjoy his grass or corn. No sooner, however, had the steeds rolled than each was again saddled, and, with the exception of the still slackened girths, was ready to be mounted in half a moment. Rifles and revolvers were carefully examined, to see whether the night-dew had done any mischief, and then, having made a careful sweep round the horizon with his field-glasses, the commander gave the order for the morning meal, which consisted of a little cold tea, some bread, and 'beltong' (sun-dried game).

"After half an hour's rest they again started as before. The day had broken with all the splendour of an African morning. . . . Mounting to the head of the kloof the party came to a splendid prospect and panorama stretching out

below. . . . Away up a smaller valley on the right lay the path that had to be followed, and, leaving the bright and smiling landscape in front, the column once more plunged into the gloom of the bush. Two more outspans brought them to sunset, and now precautions had to be redoubled, as they were nearing dangerous ground. The chances were more than probable that Cetewayo, on hearing of his brother's defection and flight, had sent a party of his warriors to take possession of his wives and cattle, both vendible commodities in the land. If this were the case, it would inevitably result that a vigilant watch would be kept to prevent their escape to Oham. Strange to say, these anticipations were only partly verified, for as the troops neared the caves they could see that they were watched, but only by scattered and weak bodies of Zulus. These fellows had evidently discovered that the white man's intention was hostile, and they probably thought his object was cattle, and not to recover or rescue Oham's wives and children, for they ran rapidly along the heights above, taking no precaution for concealment, and seeming only

anxious to drive away their herds. As the horsemen approached the caves at a canter, flankers were extended on either side to prevent surprise. The excitement of Buller's men could hardly be restrained, while the calm and stolid Dutchmen, who glided silently and grimly on, offered a wide contrast to their more hot-blooded comrades. As they came nearer and nearer the place seemed inhabited, and it was evident that the natives sent on a few days previously had apprised the people of Buller's advent and friendly intentions. Then Oham's people came crowding out of their caves, jostling each other in their anxiety to greet the English soldiers, grasping their assegais, and giving vent to a series of guttural clicks, which it would baffle any known combination of vowels to reproduce. . . . At nine the following morning a compact column was formed, consisting of the rescued allies or prisoners, the few cattle collected in the centre, and the whole party started for the homeward march. It could scarcely have been hoped that the retreat would have been unmolested, yet only at the Mklepgwene, a difficult defile, were

they fired upon by a body of Zulus, evidently hastily collected, and numbering some thousand men. The detachment reached the camp with the rescued families at 1 p.m. on the 16th."¹

This account has seemed worthy of quoting at length as a rare personal record of an expedition which may be taken as typical of the many which Colonel Buller undertook and which won for him not only the devoted admiration of the men whom he led, but also such high commendation from his own commander as to be dubbed his "right hand" during the campaign.

We are now approaching the memorable day when the dashing leader of the Frontier Light Horse was to perform such deeds as were to render his name familiar in our mouths as household words and to win for him the highest honour which can fall to the lot of a soldier—that of the decoration of the Victoria Cross, known by all as the "V.C." After some days of comparative quiet, Colonel Buller was summoned to the tent of his friend and

¹ "The Story of the Zulu Campaign," by Major Waller Ashe and Captain the Hon. E. V. Wyatt Edgell.

commander, Sir Evelyn Wood, where, with the Boer leader, Piet Uys, a council of war was held to discuss the advisability of attacking a Zulu stronghold on the Inhlobane Mountain. This mountain, an elevated tableland of about three thousand acres, standing 1,200 feet above the surrounding country, formed part of a range of mountains visible from Kambula camp. It was known that the Zulus on the mountain possessed a large number of cattle, and, despite the known difficulties, Buller and Uys were ready and willing for the fresh dangerous undertaking.

At three o'clock the following morning the first portion of the chosen detachment, consisting altogether of four hundred horsemen and three hundred natives, started, Colonel Buller and Piet Uys leading. This party was bound for the north-eastern path up the mountain. Colonel Russell followed with a second detachment to mount by the nearer western path, and Sir Evelyn Wood and his Staff started shortly after. Absolutely precipitous on its northern and southern sides, the summit was only to be attained by paths

from its north-eastern and its western extremities. By the evening the different detachments had all reached the top, which, it must be noted, is about three miles long, and then one of the native allies learned that seven large regiments had left Ulundi, the Zulu capital, three days earlier bound for that district. He told Colonel Wood, and begged that their small force might at once return to Kambula; but this could not be done without exposing Colonel Buller and those who were in front to be cut off and surrounded, so that it was decided that at all risks a junction must be made with them.

At half-past three in the morning Sir Evelyn Wood ordered the word to be quietly passed round, for the men to stand to their horses and prepare to march. The moon now and again broke through the clouds, and so helped them in following the faint traces of the leading party. Distant and desultory firing was heard towards the north-eastern side; then, as the sun rose, they met such signs of the fighting as a broken assegai, a damaged shield, then some dead Zulus and the body of a horse.

All these signs showed that Buller and his men had passed and had met with some resistance, and hoping that they had already made good their retreat by the other end of the tableland, Sir Evelyn Wood was finally compelled to return with his small party the way they had gone.

Buller had indeed lost a couple of officers and one of his men in attaining the top in the early hours of the morning, and met with some opposition on the plateau, but soon dispersed the enemy and found some two thousand head of cattle which the Zulus had driven up there for safety. He then surveyed the possible descents from the mountain, and decided to use that at the north-western extremity for the retreat of a portion of his force. Returning to the eastern end, Colonel Buller told off his second in command, Captain Barton, with a party of thirty men, to bury the bodies of those killed in the ascent, to find Colonel Weatherley with his small detachment, and return to camp with him by the southern route by which they had come.

Shortly before nine o'clock in the morning

and just after Barton's departure, Buller caught sight of the Zulu army—of which news had reached Colonel Wood—estimated at twenty thousand men, approaching the mountain from the south-east, and then about six miles away. Buller calculated that his force would have an hour's start of the enemy, but realising that the retreat of Barton would be seriously threatened by the Zulu advance, sent a couple of troopers after the captain, telling him that his campward route was to be by the north side of the mountain. The captured cattle had by this time been collected near the western extremity, and to this point Buller at once moved his force. He considered that a descent by the rugged north-western path—that nearest to Kambula, too—would allow the scattered troops on the summit to be united and withdrawn in comparative safety, while they would further gain the support of Colonel Russell's force, which had been directed to approach the plateau from the west.

At ten o'clock Colonel Wood and his staff, returning along the southern base of the mountain to visit Colonel Russell's encamp-

ment, became aware of the rapid approach of the Zulu army, and the commander at once sent a communication to Russell to meet him at a certain point. At the same time Colonel Russell, with his force on a lower plateau of the mountain than Buller, also saw the enemy, and, abandoning the cattle which they had secured, retreated to the foot of the mountain to take up a position on some rising ground to cover Buller's retreat. The English officers, however, had not been the only ones to notice the great army approaching. The numerous Zulus hidden in caves and other cover on the mountain had also seen it, and in ever-increasing numbers harassed the movement of Buller's force towards the western extremity of the plateau. When the top of the path leading down the cliff was reached the very serious difficulties of the descent became apparent. There was, however, now no alternative, and the dangerous retreat to the lower plateau had to be undertaken. This brought out the leader's masterly qualities. He worked with a marvellous coolness and with almost unexampled bravery in his efforts to get his force away to

safety with the least loss. The descent had to be made by a path which has been described as consisting of a series of ledges from eight to twelve feet wide, on which an insecure foothold could be obtained, the drop from one ledge to the next being about three or four feet.

Colonel Buller first sent down the native portion of his force, covering their retreat with the mounted men. These then began to descend, the Frontier Light Horse forming the rearguard, and for a while successfully checking the enemy. The descent was necessarily very slow, and the Zulus succeeded in getting positions above and below the path, whence, sheltered by rocks, they could keep up an incessant fire on the plucky horsemen. Buller himself was the very last man to descend, and it was in the course of this memorable retreat that he performed those amazing deeds of daring which won for him the Victoria Cross. Those deeds have been often described, but never more clearly than by his commanding officer at the time. Sir Evelyn Wood, in contributing an article on

“the Mount of Valour” to *Pearson's Magazine* three years ago, wrote of his friend as follows :—

“When the last of the troops had left the plateau, Buller was heard to say to Commandant Piet Uys, who was in command of thirty Dutchmen, ‘You go down, Piet ; I’ll stop up here ! And when you get to the bottom halt some men to cover us as we come down.’ Turning then to Lieutenant Everitt of the Frontier Light Horse, he ordered him to halt ten men, who, as a covering party, were to descend last of all. Mr. Everitt could only collect seven men, but these kept the Zulus back for some time, descending later with the enemy close upon them ; four of the little party were almost immediately killed, and Lieutenant Everitt’s horse was assailed.

“Buller, a tall and powerful man, now seizing Mr. Everitt, who was exhausted, by the collar of the coat, pulled him out of the way of the pursuing Zulus, who were themselves greatly impeded by the rugged nature of the cliffs, and, standing over his breathless lieutenant, received from him a carbine and

ammunition, saying, 'Get on down as quick as you can!' and with the three men remaining alive out of the rearguard of seven, Buller covered the retreat of the last of those descending the cliff. . . .

"Buller's command was now demoralised; and one very brave officer of an irregular corps, who had often shown great personal courage, burst into tears when his men refused to obey his order to form up to cover the retreat of the Frontier Light Horsemen, who were still descending the mountain. He himself remained, and assisted Colonel Buller in rallying the men, and had not this been effected, none of the wounded nor those who had lost their horses could have escaped.

"Buller himself was ubiquitous, and to my knowledge rescued four men that day, three of whom lived for years afterwards; the fourth man, whom he pulled out of the middle of a struggling crowd of Zulus and carried, holding on to his stirrup, down the hill, was eventually wounded much lower down, and lost his life.

"Trooper Randal, Frontier Light Horse, told me five days later that in the retreat his



THE ACT WHICH WON FOR GENERAL BULLER THE VICTORIA CROSS.

horse was completely exhausted, when he was overtaken by Colonel Buller, who was falling back with the rearmost men, and that the Colonel put him up on his own horse and carried him for some distance ; then, dropping him, returned again to the fight, this time picking up Captain C. D'Arcy, also of the Frontier Light Horse. This officer had lost both his horses, and when panting along on foot with the Zulus less than a hundred yards behind him was rescued by Colonel Buller, who took him up on his horse.

“ The first man to ascend the eastern end of the mountain in the grey dawn, Buller acted throughout the retreat as the rearmost man of the rearguard, although he knew from experience that any man who was wounded was sure to be ripped up by the ruthless enemy. . . .

“ That evening we were sitting in our sodden tents, for the rain was falling heavily. We had seen the Zulu army bivouacking seven miles off our camp, and while we did not feel doubtful of the result of any open attack, yet our native allies had disappeared, and the 1,800 British

soldiers had a stern task awaiting them on the morrow.

“Buller and his men had been almost continuously in the saddle for one hundred consecutive hours, during which time they had skirmished once, fought twice, and marched over 170 miles. Nevertheless when, at nine o'clock, a solitary fugitive from a detachment, of which some few men had escaped over the eastern end of the Mhlobane, crawling into camp, reported that half a dozen more stragglers were trying to reach Kambula, the indomitable Buller had no difficulty in immediately mounting a dozen volunteers, whom he led forth on their jaded horses into the pitchy darkness of the night, returning later with the last survivors of the bloody fight of the 28th of March.”

The official account of this fine deed, which Buller's fellow-officer so well describes, was given as follows in the *Gazette*, which announced that Colonel Redvers Buller had been awarded the Victoria Cross :—

“For his gallant conduct at the retreat at Mhlobane, on March 28, 1879, in having assisted, while hotly pursued by Zulus, in

rescuing Captain C. D'Arcy of the Frontier Light Horse, who was retiring on foot, Colonel Buller carrying him on his horse until he overtook the rearguard ; also for having on the same day, and in the same circumstances, conveyed to a place of safety Lieutenant C. Everitt of the Frontier Light Horse, whose horse had been killed under him. Later on, Colonel Buller, in the same manner, saved a trooper of the Frontier Light Horse, whose horse was completely exhausted, and who otherwise would have been killed by the Zulus, who were within eighty yards of him."

CHAPTER VII

Zulu War continued—Advance on Ulundi—Buller and the Prince Imperial—A brilliant scouting—The final battle.

BULLER'S work in Zululand was not only brilliant in itself, but it forms a highly important phase in his development as a leader, and it is fortunate that we have fuller records of his doings during this South African campaign than of any other of his military services. Many men who were engaged in the Kafir and Zulu Wars have left striking records of those struggles—records which are fortunately full of personal touches with regard to the soldierly commander of the Frontier Light Horse. His splendid performances on the Mount of Valour mark an epoch in the life of the great General, but his later achievements

during the Zulu War are also worthy of full consideration, winning as they did for him the strongest commendation of his superiors in command.

The last chapter closed with the "official" record, the very baldest account of the deed which, however simply described, compels the reader's enthusiastic admiration for the sterling qualities of the courageous soldier. The present chapter opens on the very day after the masterly retreat from the Inhlobane Mountain, and opens on one of the severest battles of the whole campaign. The great Zulu army of twenty thousand men which had been perceived the day before had made a rapid march from the King's kraal with the object of dislodging General Wood's camp of Kambula. Very few hours' rest sufficed for the brave warriors, and at noon on the following day (March 28th) the Kambula camp was severely attacked by the Zulus, and a very serious battle ensued for some hours, the masses of the enemy being finally beaten and pursued with very heavy losses, Buller and his Frontier Light Horse playing an important part in the fortunes of the

day and in the final rout of the Zulus. So thorough was the defeat on this occasion, that there followed a period of comparative quiet in the western parts of Zululand, and Colonel Wood's column had comparatively little to do until the time came for the concerted march on Cetewayo's capital, Ulundi.

A glimpse of our hero as he appeared at Kambula to a newspaper correspondent may fittingly be quoted here before we follow his fortunes on to the fall of the Zulu capital. "When I first visited Wood's camp in Zululand," Mr. Archibald Forbes has written in one of his many volumes of reminiscences, "I found Buller there in command of some 800 volunteer irregular horsemen—or perhaps rather mounted infantry; a strange, wild, heterogeneous band, whom Buller held in sternest discipline, and made do wonders in fighting and marching, by sheer force of character. A stern-tempered, ruthless, saturnine man, with the gift of grim silence not less than a gift of curt, forcible expression on occasion, Buller ruled those desperadoes with a rod of iron. Yet, while they feared him, they had a sort of dog-like

love for him." The same observant correspondent described the men of Buller's force as consisting of men of all—and no—characters, and of all nationalities, and indicates the secret of the officer's unquestioned power over them by describing him as "a silent, saturnine, bloodthirsty man, as resolute a fighter as ever drew breath—a born leader of men." It was just after the fight at Kambula camp, when Sir Evelyn Wood had given such a check to the Zulu power in defeating their army of twenty thousand, that Mr. Forbes visited it, and his descriptions of Buller are interesting as showing us the General of to-day in process of gaining that knowledge and mastery of men which it may be hoped will now stand him in good stead when he is once more engaged in warfare in South Africa; a stern-tempered, ruthless man, with a gift of grim silence no less than a gift of curt, forcible expression on necessary occasion—such is the impression which the Colonel made on the newly arrived war correspondent, and such is, in effect, the description given by most men who have only seen the officer in the field.

The Kambula fight had created the necessary "diversion" to allow of Lord Chelmsford making a strong attempt to break up Cetewayo's power with a final blow, and at length arrangements were made for a general advance. At the beginning of May Lord Chelmsford, with several of his Staff officers and Prince Louis Napoleon (the Prince Imperial), arrived at Kambula, and immediately afterwards a reconnaissance was made and a new camping ground discovered; and then the camp was broken up and the force moved off to a new ground some miles away and close to the boundary between the Transvaal and Zululand. For several months General Wood and Colonel Buller with their men had occupied Kambula, and the place had become to them one of many and honourable memories. Buller's Horse, under their able leader, had by this had a goodly share of varied experience, and were now thoroughly seasoned and fit for any calls that might be made upon them. Their numbers, too, had grown by reinforcement of several similar troops to as many as a thousand. Before actually beginning the general advance

it was decided that previous to any formidable cavalry patrol being undertaken in force, a series of short reconnaissances should be carried out by the indefatigable Buller and his ubiquitous horsemen. One of these reconnaissances calls for particular mention, if only for the very graphic description which has been left of it by an eye-witness. It started on the night of the 9th of May with General Wood himself in command, the force consisting of but about one hundred and fifty horsemen. They had gone some miles and it was broad daylight, when a couple of shots in front told them that the enemy were about. Then came a tremendous shout from the rear, and it was found that, true to their usual tactics, the Zulus had let the force go by that they might attack them, unprepared, from behind. General Wood at once ordered a halt, and gave the word for twenty men to wheel about and charge back in full force upon the unsuspecting foe. "With a hearty English shout these fellows, led by Buller, went straight at the enemy, and bursting over rough ground and through the high and tall grass drove the flying

Zulus in panic before them. Buller's appearance at this moment combined an element of the heroic and the terrible, with a strong infusion of the ludicrous and burlesque. Leading his men on at a swinging canter, with his reins in his teeth, a revolver in one hand and a knobkerrie he had snatched from a Zulu in the other, his hat blown off in the *mêlée*, and a large streak of blood across his face, caused by a splinter of rock from above, this gallant horseman seemed a demon incarnate to the flying savages, who slunk out of his path as if he had been—as indeed they believed him—an evil spirit, whose very look was death. The tables were now completely turned ; the whole of the column is safely through the poort ; one or two Zulus are seen limping away, assisted into the bush by their comrades, while the rest stand not upon the order of their going, but rush pell-mell to gain the shelter of the neighbouring caves. One large Zulu is seen to be badly hit, yet he manages to crawl away out of sight, and doubtless is assisted to escape by his fellows. The fun is becoming fast and furious, Buller's men are in their glory. They

have dashed into the kloof, and are driving the Zulus out of it in parties of six or eight at a time. Everybody, who an hour ago was as silent and sombre as the grave, thinks it now necessary to yell with excitement. . . . But the chase begins to slacken ; the pace is too good to last, the recall sounds, and the firing dies away to a few desultory shots, while the troopers canter back dishevelled and puffing like schoolboys after a hard-won goal at football."

The small party spent a couple of days skirmishing and reconnoitring in the enemy's country, and then returned with useful data to General Wood's camp. After a single day's rest another reconnaissance was decided upon, and again Colonel Buller set out, this time with a couple of hundred picked horsemen, "well-mounted, well-armed, and well-trained," and had with him besides as "guests," the Prince Imperial and several officers from headquarters. With three days' rations the party set out to reconnoitre in another direction, and again they fell in with scattered forces of Zulus, and had some slight skirmishes, but succeeded

in getting useful information about the country before returning to the camp on May 16th. On this reconnaissance the young French Prince distinguished himself by brave disregard of danger.

At length, at the end of May, matters were nearly ripe for a general advance, and the camp at Wolf's Kraal had to be given up, and Wood's Flying Column of about two thousand men began its forward movement. The Flying Column was attached to General Newdigate's (or the Second) Column, to which it acted as an advanced force, keeping about five miles ahead. In the Flying Column of course "the Rupert of South Africa," as Redvers Buller was called, had a prominent part with his fine body of horsemen ready to follow him anywhere and die for him to a man after his splendid devotion on the Inhlobane Mountain and elsewhere.

On Sunday, June 1st, occurred one of the tragedies of the campaign, when the Prince Imperial, who was attached to the headquarters Staff as a "guest," went out with a small patrolling party and was killed. With the

details of this tragic occurrence we are not here concerned, nor are we concerned to discuss the relative share of blame to be attached to the officer who galloped away from the unfortunate Prince and to the Staff officer who permitted the guest to penetrate into the enemy's country with an insufficient force. The day was a beautiful one, and General Wood had ridden out with an escort, when some fugitive horsemen were seen in the distance. They had not very long to wait for a solution of the mystery, and, riding on, they were met by Colonel Buller and a dozen of his men, no less anxious to discover who the flying horsemen might be. "They all rode on together, and rounding the base of the cliff came up with Lieutenant Carey and four troopers of Bettington's Horse. In a few seconds more the terrible secret was revealed, and Lieutenant Carey, whose horse was almost dead-beat and covered with foam, was rapidly relating to General Wood the details. 'Where is the Prince?' exclaimed Wood, as he breasted his horse at some fallen trees which intervened, and dashed forward to meet the fugitives. 'Speak, sir; what has

happened?’ ‘The Prince, I fear, is killed, sir,’ said one of the men, Carey being at first unable to speak. ‘Is that the case? Tell me instantly, sir,’ answered the General. ‘I fear ’tis so, General,’ was the answer; upon which our chief, ‘And what are you, sir, doing here?’”

There are several versions of this meeting, several of which strongly illustrate at once Buller’s blunt outspokenness and his innate detestation of an act unworthy of a soldier. The following is the story as told by Sir George Pomeroy Colley, the officer who, a couple of years later, was in command at the disastrous reverse on Amajuba Hill. Colley, who had been appointed Chief of the Staff to Lord Wolseley (then Sir Garnet Wolseley) when that officer took over the command in Zululand, wrote as follows to his wife:—

“I am afraid the more one hears of the circumstances of the Prince Imperial’s death, the more sad and discreditable to our name it appears.

“I had a graphic account of the meeting between an officer who was with him and

Buller [from a man who was present. Evelyn Wood ('Sir Evelyn' he is now, I see, and right well he has earned it) and Buller were riding ahead of the column as usual to look out for good camping ground, when suddenly they saw an officer riding furiously towards them—so furiously that Buller observed, 'Why, the man rides as if he thought the Kafirs were after him.' As he came nearer he gesticulated wildly and beckoned to them to go back, but they rode on till they met him. 'Whatever is the matter with you?' said Buller. 'The Prince—the Prince Imperial is killed,' was all the man could gasp out, breathless and wild. 'Where?—where is his body?' asked Buller sharply. The man could only gasp and point to a hill about three miles off, from which they could now see some twenty Kaffirs going away in the opposite direction with three led horses. 'Where are your men, sir? How many did you lose?' said Buller sharply and sternly, now thoroughly roused. 'They are behind me—I don't know,' stammered the unfortunate man. Then said Buller, turning on him savagely, 'You deserve to be shot,

and I hope will be. I could shoot you myself,' and turned his back on him.

"Had it been either Wood or Buller, they would have turned had it been a thousand Kafirs, and probably would have brought him away; but this wretched officer seems to have raced with his men who should get away first, and was actually leading his men in their flight, and still galloping wildly, though three miles away from the scene of action."

June was well forward when everything was ready to push on with the advance on the Zulu capital. Buller, as usual, was well to the front; in fact, he and a body of his well-trying horsemen were generally some miles ahead of Wood's Flying Column, which in turn kept about five miles in front of the main body. Buller, indeed, was indefatigable and ubiquitous—to the front, and on either flank he had patrolled for many miles, dislodging such few Zulus as were found, and gaining simply invaluable data as to the country to be traversed before reaching Cetewayo's kraal. On June 25th Buller and his party, patrolling nine miles ahead, pounced upon some seventy or eighty of the enemy

busily engaged in burning the grass, to bother the English advance by destroying food for their horses and oxen. The dashing "Rupert" and his men made short work of the Zulus, and soon put an end to their destructive action, and returned with information respecting five kraals, which had been observed guarded by about a thousand Zulus. The next day a small force was sent out to destroy these, and again Buller did yeoman's service. At length, on the 30th of June, the whole column were within a few miles of Ulundi, and an ultimatum was sent to Cetewayo, naming the conditions on which peace negotiations would be entertained, and giving the Zulu King three days in which to decide.

During these days of grace Buller was far from idle, scouring the country in front and on either flank with his men, with the double object of making observations and preventing a surprise on the part of a treacherous enemy. No reply came to Lord Chelmsford's ultimatum, but instead scattered bodies of the enemy kept up an intermittent fire on the English. Colonel Buller therefore asked and obtained permission

to make a raid into the enemy's country, which he did on the afternoon of July 3rd, having with him Lord William Beresford and a number of picked horsemen. They crossed the river Umbolosi, protected by gun-fire, and at once dashed after the Zulus on the other side, and soon put them to flight, Buller dividing his men that they might raid different points. With a hundred of his best men he contemplated a rush on Ulundi and a firing of the royal kraal, but this "somewhat harebrained exploit" was prevented by the sudden discovery of numerous Zulus in a hollow just ahead. "Here the Zulu general, whoever he was, had admirably disposed his reserves, and here, but for the steady conduct of all hands, Buller might have met his fate. As suddenly as the mountain warriors of Roderick appeared above the heather to James Fitz-James did the tall Zulu warriors put in an appearance, and from front and flank a very well-sustained fire was poured in upon the daring Buller and his men. But Buller, with all the dash of a Rupert or a Murat, had much of the prescience of a veteran. . . . He had, previously to his daring

advance in the enemy's country, ordered Commandant Raaf to halt near Nondwengo with his horsemen as reserves and supports. At the imminent moment, therefore, when the Zulus appeared in the hollows, these gallant fellows came up and saved the day, and it is more than probable many valuable lives. As Buller and his splendid marksmen retired by alternate ranks, and as each man fired, dropping his man, Raaf and his well-trained fellows covered the slow retreat." Buller, as before, behaved splendidly in the way in which, placing himself wherever hard knocks were to be obtained, he kept between his men and the oncoming enemy.

One result of this magnificently courageous reconnaissance was to make Lord Chelmsford decide to advance at once upon Ulundi, and to give the enemy every temptation to attack his force between the river and the kraal, upon a plain which Buller had marked out during one of his patrols as an ideal battle-ground. Early on the 4th the troops were moved on to this plain and formed ready in square, while Buller with his advanced body of horsemen galloped

ahead, firing the kraals and tempting the enemy to the attack. It was known that there was a great force, probably twenty thousand Zulus, in the neighbourhood, and Buller made a strong attack on the left of their main advancing column, adopting tactics similar to those which he had employed on the day before. He placed his men in two ranks, the first mounted and ready to make a dash upon any weak point in the enemy's line; the second dismounted and making capital practice at long ranges, with their saddles as a rest for the rifle. As soon as the front rank became too hardly pressed, they cantered to the rear, dismounted, and relieved the second rank.

When this had been going on for a little time the Zulus imagined that the terrible Buller and his men were flying from their onslaught, and thought the time ripe for a general advance. Meanwhile the action of the horsemen had brought the enemy within range of the Gatlings and Martinis of the square, which Buller and his men now rejoined. "Are the mounted men all in?" asked Lord Chelmsford

of General Newdigate. "They are, my lord," replied Buller, who had got back and was imperturbably lighting a cigarette. "Then give the enemy a round or two of shrapnel," said the commander, and a deadly hail was poured into the oncoming wave of savages. It was a stiff fight for a while, the thousands of Zulus pressing on despite the many who fell, but at last they wavered, and the Lancers and other cavalry were sent out and routed and pursued them, and the Zulu War was practically brought to a close by the victory of Ulundi—a victory owing in no small degree to Colonel Redvers Buller.

Before Lord Chelmsford had been able to inflict this final blow upon the Zulu power he had been practically superseded by the appointment of Sir Garnet Wolseley as Governor of South Africa, High Commissioner in Natal and the Transvaal, and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's forces in Africa. Sir Garnet was indeed then on his way to the front, and Lord Chelmsford immediately after this victory resigned his command, while Sir Evelyn Wood and Colonel Buller also decided to retire—all

prospects of much active military service being temporarily at an end.

In his official account of the battle of Ulundi transmitted to the Secretary of State for War, Lord Chelmsford paid ungrudging tribute to the services which had been rendered by Colonel Buller, saying: "Lieutenant-Colonel Buller crossed the river by the lower drift to the right of our camp, and was soon in possession of the high ground on our front and the Undabakaombie kraal. The object of Lieutenant-Colonel Buller's reconnaissance was to advance towards Ulundi, and to report on the road and whether there was a good position where our force could make its stand if attacked. I was also anxious, if possible, to cause the enemy to show his force, its points of gathering, and plan of attack. Lieutenant-Colonel Buller completely succeeded in the duty entrusted him. Having collected his mounted men near Undabakaombie from the thorny country near the river, he advanced rapidly towards Ulundi, passing Nondwengo on his right. He had reached the vicinity of the stream Untukuwini, about three-quarters of a mile from Ulundi,

when he was met by a heavy fire from a considerable body of the enemy lying concealed in the long grass around the stream. Wheeling about, he retired to the high ground near Nondwengo, where he commenced to retire by alternate positions of his force in a deliberate manner. The Zulus were checked, but in the meantime large bodies of the enemy were to be seen advancing from every direction, and I was enabled with my own eyes to gain the information I wished for as to the manner of advance and points from which it would be made in the event of our force advancing to Ulundi. Though the Zulus advanced rapidly, and endeavoured to get round his flank, Lieutenant-Colonel Buller was able to retire his force across the river with but a few casualties. He informed me of a position which, on the following day, my force occupied, and which subsequent events showed was admirably adapted for the purpose I had in view. I consider that this officer deserves very great credit for the manner in which he conducted this duty. That night the Zulus were moving about in large bodies, as testified

by the sound of their war-songs, but they in no manner interfered with us."

"One of the finest episodes in this eventful war," Lord Chelmsford elsewhere said of Buller's reconnaissance on the day before the battle of Ulundi.

While his superior officers were giving him due meed of praise, our hero himself was not neglectful of those who fought under him, as we find from his report made to Lord Chelmsford as follows: "My task has been materially lightened by the undermentioned. . . . Captain Lord William Beresford, 9th Lancers, my Staff officer, who came from India for the Zulu war, has been of immense assistance to me. Energetic and untiring, he is always at hand when wanted, while his marked gallantry in the field and his pleasant address secured the respect and ready obedience of the men."

Nor was the new Commander-in-Chief less definite in acknowledging the services which had been performed by the dashing leader of the Frontier Light Horse, for when Colonel Buller was about to leave Zululand, Lord (then Sir Garnet) Wolseley issued the following

General Order: "In notifying to the army in South Africa that Brigadier-General Wood, V.C., C.B., and Lieutenant-Colonel Buller, C.B., are about to leave Zululand for England, General Sir Garnet Wolseley desires to place on record his high appreciation of the services they have rendered during the war, which their military ability and untiring energy have so very largely contributed to bring to an end. The success which has attended the operations of the Flying Column is largely due to General Wood's genius for war, to the admirable system he has established in his command, and to the zeal and energy with which his ably conceived plans have been carried out by Colonel Buller."

Lord Wolseley also wrote to Sir Evelyn Wood at the same time, saying: "You and Buller have been the bright spots in this miserable war, and I have felt proud that I numbered you both amongst my friends and companions in arms."

Before actually leaving South Africa for home the officers were fêted and congratulated in several of the chief towns by the grateful

colonists. On one of these occasions, when speaking at Pietermaritzburg, Lord Chelmsford said: "I never would have believed it possible for any General to receive such assistance and devotion as I have experienced from my men. . . . It would be invidious to particularise individuals and services, but when I look back eighteen months two names stand out in broad relief—the names of Wood and Buller. I can say that these two have been my right and left supporters during the whole of my time in this country."

On August 5th Colonel Buller and his late leaders set sail from Cape Town in the steamer *German*, and reached Plymouth before the end of the month. Ten days after they had left the Cape Sir Bartle Frere, the High Commissioner in South Africa, bore ungrudging testimony to the value of the work performed by Wood and Buller, as is seen in his despatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: "I cannot permit Major-General Sir H. E. Wood, V.C., K.C.B., and Colonel Redvers Buller, V.C., C.B., to leave this Colony without venturing to call the attention of Her Majesty's Government to

the political services rendered by these officers during the two years and a half they have served in South Africa. It is not my province, nor is it necessary I should say a word regarding the military services they have performed, and I have already brought to the notice of Her Majesty's Government the important bearing which the position of Sir H. E. Wood's column in Zululand from January to July had on the safety of Natal and the Transvaal; but I would try to call attention to the excellent political effects of the dealings of these two officers with the colonial forces and with the colonists in general. Up to 1878 there had always been among the colonists somewhat of a dread of the strict discipline which was, as they thought, likely to be enforced by a military officer were they to serve under him, and a great distrust of Her Majesty's officers generally to conduct operations against the Kafirs. The feeling has now, I believe, disappeared among all who have served under General Wood and Colonel Buller. They have shown the colonists that military officers can deal with volunteers as with their own men, and

lead them to assured victory without sacrificing or risking more than is necessary in so doing. To the experience of their treatment of officers and men under them is largely due the readiness with which officers of the regular army are now appointed to positions in the Colonial forces in the Colony, and the good feeling which obtains at this moment between the Imperial and Colonial troops now in the field in Zululand. I would particularly notice the influence which both officers gained over their Dutch auxiliaries and the Dutch population of the Transvaal districts bordering on Zululand. I believe that whenever Sir E. Wood and his gallant second-in-command may serve again in the Transvaal, they will find all who served under them in Zululand anxious again to join Her Majesty's forces in any capacity that may be desired."

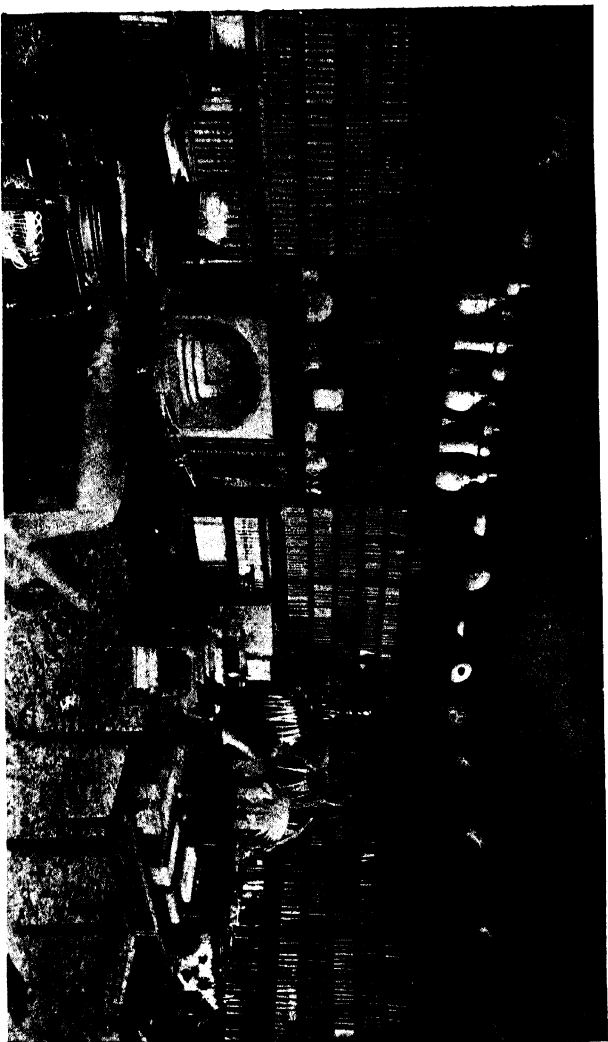
CHAPTER VIII

A cordial reception — Fresh honours — Official post — Aide-de-camp to the Queen — Africa again — The first Boer War—Buller and Amajuba Hill.

IT is scarcely necessary to say that on his return to England Buller was one of the heroes of the hour. When the steamship *German* arrived at Plymouth on August 26, 1879, he received a cordial welcome home to his native county, and was surrounded by his Devon friends as soon as the ship came alongside. He travelled with his fellow-officers by Great Western Railway to Exeter, to the disappointment of those of his Exeter friends, who had arranged for a deputation to wait upon him at the other station for the purpose of presenting him with a congratulatory address. However, at the station at which he

did arrive, he found the Rev. M. Swabey, the vicar of St. Thomas's, and a number of residents of the parish (of which the distinguished soldier is lord of the manor). In conversation with the Vicar, Colonel Buller expressed the pleasure he felt at seeing so many familiar faces to welcome him home, and had the gratification of learning that he had been promoted to the rank of a full Colonel.

Crediton, his birthplace and home, and Exeter, the capital city of his native county, were rivals in the desire to do honour to the returned Devonian, but though at first there was some slight jealousy between the two, it soon gave way, and each town performed its part in welcoming him. Although Colonel Buller had to go straight on to London he was back in his native county within a week of his return to England, and a hearty Devon welcome was accorded him when he reached his native town—a welcome that was begun by the firing of a *feu de joie* of fog signals as the train bearing him ran into Crediton station. This formed but a small indication of what was to come, for outside the station there was a



THE LIBRARY AT DOWNES.
(From a photograph by Henry Cornish, Crediton.)

regular procession waiting to convey the hero to his home half a mile or so away. The road was thronged with neighbours and visitors, while the whole route was made gay with a display of bunting and with mottoes of welcome and congratulation to the returned officer. Opposite the entrance-gate of Downes a platform had been erected, and here Colonel Buller was received with an address of welcome delivered on behalf of the people of Crediton by the Rev. Prebendary Felton Smith. The address was worded as follows:—

“ *To* LIEUT.-COL. BULLER C.B., V.C.

“ COLONEL BULLER,—As inhabitants of your native parish, many of whom have known you from your childhood, we joyfully avail ourselves of this occasion of your safe return from the arduous and harassing campaign in South Africa, to assure you of our hearty and affectionate welcome. We have watched, with the greatest anxiety and the intensest interest, your brilliant career through the whole of that campaign, and have hailed, with feelings of the deepest pride and gratification, the continuous

and unanimous testimony of the British nation, not only to your undaunted bravery in action and self-devotion to the cause of duty, but to the consummate skill and unerring judgment, under circumstances of almost overpowering difficulty, which have rendered such signal and invaluable service to that army in which you were so distinguished a leader. We feel assured that when the history of that war in which you have so lately engaged shall be written, the name of Buller will stand out as one of the most glorious upon its pages, and that that reconnaissance in which, with such strategical skill you selected the vantage ground on which that last decisive battle at Ulundi was fought, will ever be connected with your name, as contributing, perhaps in a greater degree than any action which could be named, to the virtual termination of the war. You have already won a distinction of which any British soldier may well be proud ; and whatever other honours may be in store for you, we are quite certain that their outward symbols were never borne over a truer or nobler heart, or awarded to a braver soldier.

“But while we feel, and are proud to feel, that your distinguished military career has established a claim by which the British nation at large will delight to number you amongst its heroes, we rejoice to remember at the same time that you are bound to us at Crediton by a closer and a dearer tie. You are returning to-day to the home of your ancestors, a home endeared to you by many memories which we cannot enter into, but we are sure that amongst the many endearments which cling in your case to that word ‘Home,’ there will be none more powerful in your mind than that which is afforded by the conviction that you are here surrounded by the loving hearts of friends and neighbours, who are proudly conscious that a reflected honour has fallen upon them, from the glory which attaches to you.

“We know that it would be selfish in us to wish you to sacrifice the brilliant prospects which seem surely to await you in the career which you have chosen, for the sake of taking up your residence permanently amongst us, though we cannot help looking forward to the time when Downes shall be no more the mere

remembrance of one whom ever thus we love to think of, but the settled home of another of that name, which in the person of your beloved and lamented father, was significant of all that was loving and kind and sympathising.

“To that home we this day bid you a hearty welcome, and we earnestly pray that God, who has thrown His protecting arm around you in the hour of danger and in the day of battle, may continue your shield through life, may prosper you in all your ways, and when the battle of life shall be ended, may give you His crown of glory in the life to come.

“By desire of the parishioners of Crediton.

“C. FELTON SMITH, M.A.,

“Vicar of Crediton.”

“

Having listened to his praises, always an uncomfortable position for a brave man, Colonel Buller had of course to acknowledge the very hearty welcome which was accorded him, and in doing so in a short, straightforward speech, insisted as he has always done upon the great services performed by the soldiers generally—services which make possible the honours for

their leader. We shall not have many occasions on which to record speeches by the great soldier, so will give this and the one which he delivered a few weeks later at a great county banquet in full.

“Reverend sir, ladies and gentlemen, friends and neighbours,” began the bronzed soldier, “I thank you from my heart for the welcome you have given me this day. It is pleasant to return home at any time, but it is exceedingly pleasant to return home and receive such kind words and such marks of appreciation from those among whom you have been brought up, and from those you have known from childhood. With regard to what you have said about myself, I can hardly speak. I feel I have to thank you for many reasons for your reception to-day. I can never forget all that you have said on this as on one previous occasion, as to my family, and I can only assure you that if it should please God to allow me to settle here, it will be my earnest endeavour to walk in the footsteps of my father. The reception you have given me to-day is more than a reception to an individual, for I cannot but think that in

giving me this welcome you are also thanking those men to whose energy and courage I am indebted for being here to-day. I have seen in the newspapers adverse comments on the men who have been assisting the British troops in South Africa. I can only say this, that I have been living amongst them for eighteen months—volunteers and yeomen such as I see around me to-day, men who came forward in defence of their hearths and homes—and I can assure you that it would have been impossible for any one to have had to do with a more gallant or more devoted body of men. I feel that in receiving me this day you are thanking those men whose services have placed me where I am. In conclusion, I beg with my whole heart to thank you one and all for the great kindness you have shown in giving me such a welcome.”

Lusty Devon cheering greeted the gallant officer's words and then the horses were removed from his carriage and willing hands drew it up the drive to the door of Colonel Buller's home.

A month later it was not Crediton only, but

representatives of all parts of Devonshire, that met together to welcome home and do honour to the latest addition to the long roll of Devon worthies. It was on October 2nd that a grand banquet was given to the popular soldier in the Victoria Hall, Exeter, under the presidency of the Duke of Somerset, Lord-Lieutenant of the county. Between four and five hundred ladies and gentlemen sat down. After the repast and the usual loyal toasts came the toast of the evening, in proposing which the Duke of Somerset asked the company to drink the health of "Colonel Buller, our guest, and a Devonshire man."

In reply, Colonel Buller made a speech which is marked at once by such characteristic modesty in the acceptance of praise, and has one or two such pertinent autobiographic touches that no apology is needed for quoting it at full now, just twenty years after it was delivered to an enthusiastic and admiring audience of the speaker's fellow-Devonians. When the applause with which his appearance was greeted had died away the hero of Inhlobane and Ulundi spoke as follows :—

“ I have first to endeavour, and it can only be an endeavour, to express to you insufficiently my thanks for the very kind manner in which my name has been received, and also for the magnificent testimonial you are giving me as a memorial of your kindness. The proceedings of this day will be always present in my memory. I shall always recollect them with the deepest feelings of gratitude and friendship. At the same time, I must say that I face you with a certain feeling of unworthiness. Had this war been a war of the older days, possibly I might have done ten times more than I have done, without any notice being taken of it. I cannot help remembering that in the old days the General was the central figure of the army. The public obtained their information regarding the doings of that army only through the General's despatches ; communication was difficult, and they came home but seldom. The General was trusted faithfully through reverses, and when in the end he achieved success he reaped the greater part of the glory. In these days matters have changed a good deal. The able and the brave men who now represent the

public Press in all parts of the world keep us soldiers in the full blaze of light, and send home the most rapid and graphic descriptions of all we are doing. They have their duty to perform as we soldiers have, and they do it. Their duty is to interest the public, and we cannot fairly complain that in order to do that properly they are obliged to avoid generalities and professional technicalities, and to (as it were) personify everything. Every mail requires some striking word-painted picture to be sent home, a picture in which some individual shall be prominent. I will do them justice, and say that they are all so kindhearted, they always try and make the best of everything, and the consequence is that from their descriptions the visible hand of him who is called upon to execute is always recognised, praised, and perhaps over-duly honoured, while the hidden brain which has directed that hand, which has thought and planned-out the execution, is either forgotten or overlooked. Be this as it may, whether in olden days I should have got the credit given me to-day or not, it does not prevent my great gratitude to you and my deep appreciation of the reception given to me

as a Devonshire man by my fellow-countrymen. Throughout the record of dangers bravely met and difficulties successfully overcome, which we call English history, whenever there is anything important to be done the names of Devonshire men come more or less to the front. I can hardly say as much now as I did when I last returned from abroad, when, out of four officers of the executive Staff, three were Devonshire men. Yet in this war Devonshire men have taken a leading part, and many of them have done remarkably good work. In the column I was with one of our best guides, and certainly the man who knew most of anybody about that unknown Zulu country, who had been thirty-six years on the frontier, and was really the pioneer of civilisation there—was a Tiverton man. We have all heard of the distinguished Devonshire man whose name is connected with the defence of Rorke's Drift—Major Chard. And of the many things I saw well done in that war—and I saw a great many well done—there was nothing that impressed me more than the way in which the officers and men of

the Royal Artillery stood to their guns on the 29th of March. Alone, outside their entrenchments—with their supports near them certainly, but still behind their entrenchments—these officers and men fought their guns against overwhelming odds, and, as I have said, perfectly in the open. It was a sight any Englishman might be well proud of, and it was additionally pleasing to me because the officer commanding the battery, Major Tremlett, was not only a Devonshire man, but came from my own valley—in fact, he was a Crediton man. I could multiply instances which I know of Devonshire men having done their duty as Devonshire men always do ; but there are two which occur to me at this moment as particularly appropriate to mention. I was passing through Maritzburg in August last year. The regiment I was commanding wanted a few recruits, and so many offered themselves that I had a good deal of difficulty in selecting them. I asked some ten or a dozen their names. The second man told me his name was Vinnicombe. I said, ‘That’s good enough for me, you come from the right end of England, at

any rate.' 'Well,' he replied, 'I come from Devonshire.' And he *was* good enough for me. He stayed with me throughout the war, he was one of the very best men I had, and I had the greatest pleasure last week in writing to his mother to tell her that the Queen had been pleased to give him one of the most valuable decorations a soldier can receive—the medal for distinguished service and gallant conduct in the field. I think I knew most of the Devonshire men with me; but I have found out a new one to-day. I mean Major Walsh, of the 13th Regiment, one of the most gallant officers in the field. But there is one whom I must mention, last, but certainly not least; one who, if not a Devonshire man, Devonshire has more right to claim than any other county. I allude to Sir Evelyn Wood. His character is known to the world, and is beyond praise from me; but still I think I may say as a friend—and he has given me the right to call him 'friend'—that in Sir Evelyn Wood's character there is one thing which, above all others, I have learnt to wonder at and admire, namely, the manner in which he has been able

to combine the most extreme resolution with the utmost kindness of heart. I don't know anybody with a kinder heart ; in fact, I don't believe he ever did an unkind action, except, perhaps, he may have done a rather unkind one to me just now. Speaking so immediately before me on the same subject, he has, to a certain degree, taken my speech out of my mouth ; and I, perhaps, owe him one for that. But at the same time I cannot help rejoicing that he should have so done, and I know how grateful he, as a generous, kind man, must have been to have the first opportunity of bearing testimony to the many gallant deeds and many brave actions which have been done by men under his command, many of which, alas ! were paid for by the actors' lives. I, too, feel grateful that so noble a theme should have fallen into the hands of one who is far better able to deal with it than I am. Sir Evelyn Wood has dealt broadly with the actions of the whole of the regular troops under his command. He has also fully—I trust you will all agree with me here—fully exonerated the Flying Column to which I had the honour to belong, from

the accusations of cruelty brought against the men composing it, and he has left me nothing new to deal with except, perhaps, what I may call the political side of the question. Now, I have been warned by the noble president that I must not touch the political side. Well, soldiers have nothing to do with politics, and I think the less they know about them the better. But, at the same time, any workman does his work better when his heart is in it, and when he feels it is a good work; and I must say that war, which is a disagreeable thing to have anything to do with at any time, is rendered less repulsive to the actors in it if they can believe the war in which they are engaged is a right war. Now I am certain that when the history of the Zulu War comes to be written nobody will doubt that it was a righteous war. It was a war of civilisation against barbarity. No one who has ridden, as I have often done, across the valleys on the Natal and Transvaal side of Zululand, and seen what a beautiful, smiling country it is, a well-settled, fertile country, as it was up to two years ago, and tolerably thickly

populated, can fail to believe that the whole of that country is meant to be a settled country in which men may live in peace and safety. But before this war they could not do so. Early in the year, before the war was declared, I was riding along what was then our border, and I passed dozens of burnt-down and deserted farms. One particularly struck me, and I asked a Dutchman who was riding with me whose farm it was and why it was deserted? He said that poor Beestor was fond of his farm, and I noticed that the house was well built, that the cattle enclosures were well built, that there were plenty of fruit-trees and flowers, and that it was evident that a great deal of money had been laid out on the farm. I asked why poor Beestor had left, and my companion said he could not stay, the Zulus annoyed him so. I asked, 'What do you mean by annoying him?' He replied that they would come and drive his cattle away, and when he was away looking for them would sit on the fence sharpening their assegais, and tell his wife he would never come back again, and that they would kill her in the evening. On one occasion my companion told

me they said they came to hunt, but, instead of hunting, they stabbed this man's sheep and goats. Well, it has been said that the Zulus are a brave nation, who have only been defending their own country. I can only say that at the very beginning of this war they were intending to invade the part of the country I was in, and it was only stopped by General Wood attacking them and breaking up their column. But they did invade it afterwards, and our Flying Column had to trace them. I must say I never can forget the feelings with which I saw their awful work, for the whole way was marked with slaughtered men, women, and children. I could not help thinking then, that had we waited and allowed such an invasion as that to be carried into Natal, how frightful the consequences must have been! It has been further said that the colonists of Natal have got up this war for their own ends and for their own profit, and have not attempted to assist us in any way, either in men, in money, or in hospitality. I do not think that is true. As far as my own experience goes I know it is not true. Among the many kind letters I have

received since I came here, congratulating me on my great and good fortune, I have received none kinder than a letter sent me by a lady, a colonist of Natal, whom I saw once, when, marching with some troops up the country, her husband met me on the road, and, much to his good wife's astonishment and annoyance, brought me in to partake of a breakfast she had not prepared for me. That lady wrote to me the other day, congratulating me, and saying how very pleasant it was to find that people whom she had known had got back safely from the war. When I tell you that this lady's own husband was slaughtered at Isandhlwana, and that her brother was one of my bravest lieutenants, you will imagine what her feelings must have been when she read in the papers that Natal had done nothing to assist in the war. I hope that it will not be thought that I have dwelt too much upon this subject, but it is one upon which I feel deeply. When I recollect what the men are with whom I have been associated so long—when I remember that whatever I may have done is due to the assistance of men mostly colonists, men of whom any country in the world

might be proud — knowing as I do that in whatever I may have done I have been assisted by these men, I cannot help feeling that those who have borne with me all the difficulties and dangers of the war have a right to an equal share with me in the honours and the kind words you are good enough to bestow upon me to-day. I should not feel that I had done my duty to these men who have served so gallantly with me if I had not taken this opportunity of vindicating their character and conduct from the unjust imputations that have been brought against them. I ask you now, therefore, to let me feel that the praises, the kind words, and the honours you have bestowed on me to-day are offered equally, and belong equally, to those men who gained for me the renown I now enjoy. Then I can, as I do now, thank you with my whole heart.”

It is pleasant to read this speech and find the brave man trying to lessen the importance of his own achievements, and to explain away his position as being more or less foisted upon him by the war correspondents; it is also extremely interesting, and especially at the

present juncture, to recall his cordial words of praise for the Colonial horsemen whom he led to such dashing victories. The heroes of the Zulu War were indeed fêted on all hands, and Buller came in not only for his share of general admiration and applause, but also for his due meed of praise from the commander of the British forces. Sir Evelyn Wood, too, never tired of recounting the good qualities of his able and brave lieutenant. "You have all heard," he said, at a City banquet, "of the valour of my right-hand man, but I alone, perhaps, can realise the full value of his services. Careful of his men's lives, reckless of his own, untiring and unflinching in the performance of duty, we owed much of our success to his brilliant leadership of our mounted men. To his devoted friendship I owe more than I can express. Men learn to know each other well in active service, and I have not known a better friend, nor a better soldier, than Redvers Buller."

Immediately on his return, as has been stated, Lieutenant-Colonel Buller was promoted to the rank of full Colonel, and was further honoured by being appointed aide-de-camp to Her

Majesty the Queen, while his personal bravery was to be familiarised to all men by the honourable initials, "V.C." being ever afterwards associated with his name, to show that he had gained the coveted honour of the Victoria Cross "for valour" shown in battle. That he merited that honour as but few have done we saw in following his doings during the war.

In 1880 he was appointed Quartermaster-General of the North British District, but did not hold that official position for long, as early in the year following we find him again in South Africa. The Zulu troubles had been finally settled, and Sir Garnet Wolseley had made a peace. Troubles had, however, been simmering in the Transvaal, and these at length broke out in open revolt on the part of the Boers in December, 1880, when Colonel Anstruther's column was almost annihilated on the way to Pretoria. The prospect of further fighting attracted Colonel Buller to the Colony where he had already covered himself with honour, and shortly after the war broke out he became Chief of the Staff of Sir Evelyn

Wood, when that officer succeeded to the command of the unfortunate Sir George Pomeroy Colley.

Much has been heard in connection with General Buller's command in the war against the Transvaal Republic of the cry, "Remember Majuba," and indeed that terrible tragedy is little likely to be forgotten in England. Here briefest mention must be made of the tragedy, because it belongs to a story about Sir Redvers Buller which, if not true, is at least *ben trovato*. Although recounted with great circumstantiality as having been heard from Sir James Sivewright there are in it some doubtful elements.

Sir George Pomeroy Colley, who was Commander-in-Chief and Governor of Natal, suffered one or two serious reverses at the beginning of the war—in the same district as that first attacked by the Boers eighteen years later—and at the end of February, 1881, having marched a small force to the top of Amajuba Hill in the extreme north of Natal, was surrounded by the enemy and killed, his entire force being destroyed. The story runs that

Colonel Redvers Buller, then acting as military secretary to Sir Leicester Smythe, Commander-in-Chief at the Cape, was visiting Mr. (now Sir) James Sivewright, then General Manager of the South African Telegraphs at his residence in a suburb of Cape Town, and was in unusually low spirits. His host rallied him on his quiet mood, when the officer confessed to feeling particularly anxious just then as to the course of the war in Natal. Mr. Sivewright was as much astonished at the reason for it as he was at the mood, and argued that though Colley had suffered twice at the hands of the Transvaal burghers under Joubert, he was well able not only to hold his own, but to give a good account of himself, and to make the Boers suffer for their temerity in invading British territory ; while, if required, was not Sir Evelyn Wood hurrying to the front with reinforcements ?

Colonel Buller admitted this, but still felt that there was grave reason for anxiety, and argued, " Does Sir George Colley know this African ground as we know it ? He may be tempted to go up one of those infernal hills

Very well, he'll climb one of them, but not really get to the top ; or, if he does get there, he won't understand that the top's no use unless you know which ridge to guard. And, again, I ask you, does he know our African hills? "

His host then suggested that they should drive into Cape Town and get into telegraphic communication with the camp at Mount Prospect—a suggestion which Buller cordially seconded, for in his gloomy mood, with a kind of prescience of coming danger, it was a great thing to be up and doing. They proceeded at once to the office, where the head of the Department soon got into communication with the camp, and received what he considered reassuring news—that Sir George Colley had moved out in force on the previous day, and was then understood to be in command of the Boer position, the enemy having probably retreated. Still Colonel Buller did not feel in any way satisfied, but rather the reverse, saying, " You'll see, it's the very thing I told you. Colley has gone up some mountain. He'll think he commands the Boer position,

but he won't. It takes an African to do that. Please God the Boers have been bluffed and have bolted."

They went back to Mr. Sivewright's house to lunch, but during the afternoon the despondent Buller insisted upon returning to the town to learn if any news had come through. His host again accompanied him, and on their way they met an official with a message for Mr. Sivewright. Impatiently Colonel Buller tore it open and read the fatal news that Sir George Colley had taken up a position on Amajuba Hill, had been stormed by the enemy, and he and his Staff and most of his men were killed and the rest made prisoners! For a moment the awful intelligence of the fate which had befallen his friend staggered Buller, but only for a moment was he overcome by it. Then he at once turned his attention to what was to be done in face of the calamity which had befallen the British forces in Natal. His mind was at once made up; he returned to Cape Town and going to General Smythe's quarters briefly explained what had happened. The General was no less shocked than Buller

had been, and at once began considering what had best be done.

"I'll tell you what we must do, sir," Buller is reported to have replied, with instant decision ; "you must leave with me to-night to take over the command. You are senior officer in this country, and it is your right. We must catch the Boers at once. Here is Mr. Sivewright. He'll go to the Union Company and get you a small steamer, and we'll start at seven to-night."

The General raised objections, saying that he must at least see the Governor.

"But," remonstrated the masterful military secretary, "as soon as you see Sir Hercules he'll stop you. This isn't the time for 'waiting instructions from England.' We must go now. It is our—I beg your pardon, sir, it's *my* chance in life."

Finally the General agreed, the steamer was secured, and the hour arranged for the departure arrived, but instead of General Smythe there came a note from him explaining that he had seen the Governor, who had vetoed their little plan, and insisted on "waiting for instructions from England"!

Thus it was that delays occurred, and at length, instead of prompt and sustained action against the revolted Transvaalers, a peace was patched up that gave the Boers pretty well all they wanted at the time, and that has now, after many years, led to another and bitterer war upon the same battle-grounds, and the officer who was denied the chance which he then wished to seize, has now gone out with full powers against the same enemy.

After Colley's death at Amajuba Hill the chief command in Natal devolved upon Colonel Buller's old friend and comrade-in-arms Sir Evelyn Wood, and Sir Evelyn promptly appointed the younger hero to be his Chief of the Staff, with the local rank of a Major-General. Buller, although busily engaged in Natal with the onerous duties of his post, and having to be prepared for continuing the war at a moment's notice, so to speak, was not destined then to have any actual fighting with the Boers. Sir Evelyn Wood was not allowed to "avenge Majuba," but acting under instructions from the Home Government had to enter into negotiations for a peace. It is understood Sir

Evelyn Wood and General Buller had arranged for a double attack on Lang's Nek, the former working round and attacking from the Transvaal side, while Buller moved on it from Mount Prospect camp, whence Sir George Colley had made his ill-fated excursions against the enemy. However, it was not to be ; the preliminaries of peace were arranged, and the ill-starred Convention of 1881 became an accomplished thing.

CHAPTER IX

First Egyptian campaign—Tel-el-Kebir—Knighthood—
Marriage—Suakin—El Teb and Tamai—Egypt again
—*En route* for Khartum—A masterly retreat—A good
story.

THESE were busy years for our hero. The brief Boer War came to a close early in 1881, and in the autumn of the following year the keen soldier was once more employed, this time on another part of the Dark Continent. Meanwhile, however, he had taken an important step on August 10, 1882, when he had married Audrey Jane, daughter of the fourth Marquis of Townshend and widow of the Hon. G. T. Howard. Lady Audrey, it may here be said, has always proved herself a true friend of the soldiers, and is as popular at Aldershot as her famous husband. Her



LADY AUDREY BULLER.
(From a photograph by Bullingham.)

thoughtfulness and kindness towards others has been strongly shown during the recent trying times when soldiers' wives and families have been suddenly left but partially provided for, owing to the breadwinners being called away to fight in South Africa.

It may here be mentioned that Sir Redvers Buller has no son of his own, and that both of his stepsons joined the army.

Within but two or three weeks of his marriage Colonel Buller had to start off again on active service. By the middle of May, 1882, a series of military demonstrations had placed Arabi, a Colonel of the Egyptian Army, in virtual possession of the executive power in Egypt. During the summer it became more and more evident that an English Expedition would have to be sent out to reduce things to order. When this was finally decided upon, Wolseley was appointed to the chief command, and was once more enabled to count among his able lieutenants his old comrade of China, Canada, and the Gold Coast.

Colonel Buller was appointed head of the Intelligence Department, and arrived at head-

quarters to take up his duties on September 5, 1882. Four days later the commander and his Staff started for the front beyond Kassassin and within five thousand yards of the fortifications of Tel-el-Kebir, and on that very same day the action of Kassassin was fought, and in that action Buller was engaged. After the flight of the enemy, says the official historian of the campaign, he distinguished himself by the bold manner in which he took the necessary observations for calculating the exact distance to Tel-el-Kebir :—

“ Not only had the reconnaissances of the Indian cavalry and Lieut.-Colonel Tulloch’s earlier reports furnished a great deal of information, but, taking advantage of the enemy’s flight on the 9th of September, Colonel Redvers Buller had ridden in a wide sweep somewhat round the extreme left of the enemy’s lines at Tel-el-Kebir, and had observed the nature of the works and the general line of their trace. On a previous day he had observed them carefully from the point marked B¹ on the map to

¹ These letter references are to maps in the “ Official History of the Campaign of 1882.”

the south of the canal, that being the nearest high ground to the lines on the enemy's right which it was possible to reach. Furthermore, from the front he had taken observations at the point S. From all these sources and their own observations the distance from the point A on Ninth hill had been fixed by Lieut.-Colonel Tulloch and Major Hart, V.C., at 6,660 yards from the work at B, a measurement which will be found to correspond with remarkable exactness to its position, as now determined by the triangulated survey."

This means, as an expert writer has said, that one of the most important elements of the calculation was that by a dashing ride Colonel Buller had actually penetrated beyond the enemy's lines, and had calmly, from within ~~their~~ trace, taken an angle with his prismatic compass.

After the action at Kassassin Buller proceeded with General Wolseley and his Staff towards Tel-el-Kebir. From their position, every morning before dawn the leader and the members of his Staff went to an undulating piece of ground in front of the enemy's works and thence took their observations of the Arabs'

habits. It was ascertained that the outposts and picquets of the enemy were only sent outside the entrenchments at daybreak, and this confirmed General Wolseley in his intention of attacking by night. Taking none but the immediate members of his Staff into his confidence as to the imminence of the attack he ordered the troops to march forward during the early hours of the night and halt within easy distance of the fortifications.

Silently the force moved forward—with something of an awful calm but steadily and resolutely towards the unsuspecting enemy. One of the first essentials of a successful night attack is of course a knowledge of the ground leading up to the enemy's position, and this, thanks to Colonel Buller's courage, had been obtained more perfectly than can often happen in similar cases. The well-planned attack proved, as everyone knows, eminently successful, and despite the bravery of the Arabs, with their total disregard of death, the stubbornly contested battle of Tel-el-Kebir was won before the day was far advanced, and the power of Arabi Pasha was effectually crushed.

Redvers Buller was, as had been said, the brain of Wolseley's little army during this brief campaign, and he reaped his share of honours when all was over by being knighted (K.C.M.G.) by receiving a medal with clasp, the bronze star, and the Order of Osmanieh.

On returning to England he took up his duties as Deputy-Adjutant-General to the Forces—the Adjutant-General at the time being Lord Wolseley. Here, perhaps, is the most fitting point for introducing a striking contrast between the two great soldiers which has been noted by Mr. Charles Lowe: “In the case of Buller the favour of his chief must have been all the more impartial as the personal characteristics of the two men, who had been cast in totally different moulds, were almost antagonistic. Wolseley is of slight but compact and elegant build, vivacious, sociable, sparkling, swift-darting, polished, courtier-like, suggestive more of celerity than of strength—a soldier of the physical and even intellectual mould of Frederick the Great; while Buller has decidedly something of the Cromwell in him, being tall, big-boned, and ponderous, with a touch of ungainliness even

in his figure ; severe, almost sullen, in his aspect ; curt of speech and abrupt in manner ; taking no pains to glove his iron hand in velvet ; sharp and straightforward, averse to all show and self-advertisement, an intense hater of shams and humbug ; a man calculated to inspire fear and respect more than affection in his subordinates, but withal a man of great honesty of purpose and force of character, to be trusted implicitly by his friends and dreaded by his foes. Wolseley is more the French type of soldier, dashing yet thorough, albeit fond of form and appearance, and even an occasional glance at the gallery ; while Buller reminds one of the solid, stolid, heavy-handed, heavy-treading German, serious, single-minded, and calmly masterful in all his ways."

In 1883 Sir Redvers Buller was appointed Assistant-Adjutant-General at headquarters, but had not been engaged on his official duties during many months when an opportunity arose for him to experience fighting in a new quarter. At the beginning of the following year General Sir Gerald Graham was situated at Suakin preparing for an attack on Osman

Digna, and Colonel Buller was offered the post of second in command, with local rank as a Brigadier-General. He had already, during the previous decade seen active fighting, and borne a noble part in it too, in three parts of Africa, and readily jumped at the opportunity of fresh service in the continent. Routine men are said to have grumbled a good deal at Colonel Buller having been appointed a Brigadier-General to Sir Gerald Graham, but amply did the able soldier justify the selection made by those responsible for the appointment, for it was his skill and coolness in a crisis that not only averted an otherwise inevitable disaster to the British arms but converted it into a really emphatic victory.

On February 12, 1884, then, he left London to take up a command under General Graham in the advance on the Sudanese rebels. With him were Colonel Herbert Stewart and other officers, and as it was expected that General Graham would delay his advance until their arrival, the Admiralty despatch steamer *Helicon* was ordered to convey them from Brindisi to Egypt. A bad storm delayed

the *Helicon*, compelling her to run to shelter several times, and thus it was that a week was spent cruising among the Grecian isles before the impatient officers were landed at Alexandria. On the morning of February 27th Buller and Stewart had, however, reached their destination at Trinkitat, and at once went off on a tour of their respective commands, the former having the 1st Infantry Brigade and the latter the cavalry force under his charge.

Early on the morning of February 29th, only a couple of days after Buller's arrival, the advance was begun, the British troops, four thousand strong, moving forward in square formation on the enemy. Shortly before noon the fight commenced at El Teb, the Sudanese Arabs fighting with extraordinary valour and total disregard of death. General Buller was active all the time in watching and strengthening threatened points, keeping a firm and cool control and inspiring those in contact with him with something of his own qualities. Before the day was out the enemy had been dislodged from their positions and the victory was won, but further fighting was anticipated in a few

hours. In the official despatch describing the battle which Sir Gerald Graham sent to the War Office, he mentioned our hero in cordial terms: "Brigadier-General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., K.C.M.G., C.B., who was specially appointed second in command, showed himself worthy of his high reputation as a thorough soldier and a most valuable officer."

That Sir Redvers is as ready to appreciate bravery in others as he is brave himself we have many instances, and one occurred during this very fight of El Teb, for noticing an act of heroism on the part of a member of the Naval Brigade which assisted at the battle, Buller promptly made a note of it and reported on the following day :—

"CAMP, TEB, *March* 1, 1884.

"SIR,—I have the honour to bring to the notice of the Major-General commanding the following distinguished act of bravery which came under my observation yesterday, which I would recommend as being worthy of being submitted to the Lords of the Admiralty for the distinction of the Victoria Cross.

“Captain Wilson, R.N., H.M.S. *Hecla*, on the Staff of Rear-Admiral Sir W. Hewett, V.C., K.C.B., attached himself during the advance on the Krupp Battery yesterday to the right half battery, Naval Brigade, in the place of Lieutenant Boyds, R.N., dangerously wounded.

“As we closed on the battery, the enemy moved out on the corner of the square, and upon the gun detachment who were dragging the Gardner gun. Captain Wilson sprang to the front and joined for a second or two in single combat with some of the enemy, protecting his detachment till some men of the York and Lancaster Regiment assisted him with their bayonets.

“But for the action of Captain Wilson I think one or more of his detachment must have been speared.

“Captain Wilson was wounded, but remained with the half battery during the day.

“I have, &c.,

“REDVERS BULLER,

“*Brigadier-General Commanding 1st Infantry Brigade.*”

Captain Wilson's bravery, it is pleasant to know, was rewarded as Buller suggested it should be.

Five days after the victory of El Teb General Graham removed his force back to his base at Suakin, and to Brigadier-General Buller as senior military officer fell the task of superintending the re-embarkation of troops at Trinkitat—a laborious and responsible duty which he performed to the entire satisfaction of his leader. Six days later another move against the bravely persistent enemy had to be made, and on March 11th General Buller took command of the infantry force proceeding against Osman Digna's camp; they left Suakin at six o'clock in the evening, each man provided with a hundred cartridges and full water-bottles.

They came in contact with the enemy near Osman Digna's headquarters at Tamai on March 13th, and there General Graham divided his forces into two squares, and Sir Redvers Buller had command of the square formed by the First Brigade—consisting of the Gordon Highlanders, the Royal Irish, and his own

old regiment, the King's Royal Rifles. Again Buller's "luck," controlled by his indomitable firmness and bravery, saved the day, even as it had done so on Inhlobane Mountain and before Ulundi. The Second Brigade was the first to come into action, and such was the terrible rush of the fearless enemy that the square was broken and the day bid fair to set in disaster, but Buller's brigade had not only resisted the onrush of the "Fuzzy-Wuzzies," but it was able at once to move up to the support of General Davis's brigade to pour a heavy cross fire into the Arabs, and, bearing the brunt of battle, to allow it to re-form, and "the shaken squares stiffened into fresh and successful resistance under his personal direction." Thus ably seconded, the broken square retreated somewhat, formed up, and the two together succeeded in driving off the Dervish enemy and adding a new and striking story to the annals of British victory. In this engagement, too, the hero of the day had another of his very narrow escapes, his horse being shot through the ear.

With this fight the objects of the Suakin

Expedition were gained, though not for long did Sir Redvers enjoy a period of rest from active service. In May of the same year (1884) he was gazetted Major-General, "for distinguished service in the field," and during the summer, when an Expedition for the relief of General Gordon, then shut up in Khartum, was under consideration, it was suggested that men might be taken up the Nile in small boats as they had before been taken to Central Canada. Lord Wolseley drew up a memorandum on the organisation of an expedition for the relief of Khartum, and was asked by the Duke of Devonshire (then Lord Hartington) if progress in boats would not be rendered impossible between the southern end of the Wady Halfa railway and Berber. Lord Wolseley replied (on April 14th): "To those who do not know what was done by the men of the Red River Expedition, the possibility of reaching Berber in boats may well be doubted. Sir Redvers Buller took part as a captain, commanding a company in that expedition; tell him to study the question and state his opinion."

This was done, and so among others asked to advise on the practicability of the scheme was Sir Redvers Buller, who, with two other officers, Sir John McNeill and Colonel (now Sir) W. F. Butler who had also been engaged on the Expedition of 1870, made a joint report on July 29, 1884. From this report a few passages may fitly be quoted as showing the value of the earlier experiences and also as having a direct influence on the next campaign for the relief of General Gordon.

“In 1870,” reported Sir Redvers and his colleagues, “a force consisting of about 1,400 men proceeded from Thunder Bay on Lake Superior, to Fort Garry, on the Red River, a distance of over six hundred miles, through a wilderness practically destitute of supplies, and where no native labour was obtainable.

“Remembering this, we believe that a brigade can easily be conveyed in small boats from Cairo to Dongola in the time stated by Lord Wolseley, and further, that should it be necessary to send a still larger force by water

to Khartum, that operation will present no insuperable difficulties.

“ From all we can learn about the Nile, and the difficulties of desert journeys, where water for all the men and animals employed has to be conveyed on camels, we are convinced that if it is necessary to take a fighting force to Khartum before the end of the year, or the end of January, the Nile will be found the easiest, the safest, and immensely the cheapest line of advance to adopt. . . . The military proposal has in view the employment of small boats, such as were used during the Red River Expedition, and for these boats not only is high Nile not essential, but a lower condition of the river will be more favourable to the operations, while it is evident that the difficulties of the ascent will decrease in direct proportion to the weight of the boats employed, and we believe that, except at the one or two very bad spots, the crew of ten soldiers and two natives will be able to take their boat, without other assistance, through all the rapids between Sarras and Hannek.

“ In our opinion the question really resolves

itself into this : Is it possible to procure and place on the Nile at Sarras five hundred boats by the 5th of October ?

“ Surely this should be possible. . . . If this is done by the date specified above, we believe that the further advance of the brigade to Dongola is a matter of detail well within the power of the military authorities.”

It is now a matter of common knowledge that the advice of these officers was adopted, despite the opposition of men, who, not having their practical experience, thought any attempt to take a large force up the Nile in small boats was to court disaster. Boats were at once ordered, and “ voyageurs ” and other boatmen engaged from Canada and other parts of the Empire to assist in the work which was before the Expedition being organised for the relief of Khartum. Lord Wolseley, who was placed in command of the Relief Expedition, again had about him several of the officers who had braved so much under his leadership, and prominent among these was Sir Redvers Buller, to whom, as Chief of the Staff, fell the task of organisation.

In October the commander and his Staff were busy in Egypt pushing forward the work on which so many anxious minds at home were set—the work which it was hoped would bring back from amid the surrounding hordes of the Mahdi's fanatics the intrepid General Gordon. At the end of October Lord Wolseley went on to Dongola and Korti, leaving his Chief of the Staff “up to the eyes” in work at Wady Halfa. Much had to be done, not only in equipping the boats but also in arranging for the provisioning of the two columns, both that which was to proceed up the Nile and that which was to make its way across the desert. Hard at it for several weeks, it was December 15th before General Buller could follow his chief, whom he joined at Korti on the 24th of the same month. The difficulties of his position may be imagined from a single entry made in his diary as Chief of the Staff. Of the great difficulty of securing a sufficient number of camels, he wrote indignantly, saying it was “a fair instance of the way in which we are harassed, thwarted, and plundered by the Egyptian authorities.”

Still there was much "routine" work to be done before any actual fighting was likely to take place, and that this routine work was capably and brilliantly done by the Chief of the Staff is acknowledged by all competent to judge. Such labour is not "showy," but it is none the less vitally important as a factor in the success of an army. The difficulties of transport and supply arrangements may be guessed at from passages in the official correspondence of the campaign.

General Buller wrote, for example, to the commander of the River Column, saying: "Every endeavour will be made to complete the infantry of your force up to 100 days' rations per man before they start; but it is possible the difficulties of transport may make it almost impossible to do so within a reasonable time. It is desirable, therefore, for you to reconsider whether it may not be possible for you to advance, say two battalions of infantry and a portion of your artillery and mounted men, through the Monassir country to Abu Hamed, and so open the line of supply from Korosko."

It was at Korti that news came of the severe fighting near Gubat, whither Sir Herbert Stewart had been sent to gain possession of the wells there and to advance on Metemmeh—news that included the sorrowful intelligence that Colonel Fred Burnaby was killed and General Stewart severely wounded (he succumbed shortly afterwards). It was, by the way, at first intended that the hero of the “Ride to Khiva” should have accompanied General Earle’s River Column, but early in January General Buller had telegraphed: “I must steal Burnaby. I don’t know who else is to command Metemmeh.”

Lord Wolseley at once offered to his Chief of the Staff the command of the Abu Klea force, and Sir Redvers, nothing loth to be at the front, left the main camp with some small reinforcements and hurried across the desert to Gubat. He thoroughly knew the difficulty of the task entrusted to him, for he was, according to his first instructions, to push on and get possession of Metemmeh, and he had learned, to use his own words, that “these Arabs do charge home, and very quickly,” and that it

was strongly advisable "not to let them get a run at us unless we are in square." The Gubat fight had taken place on January 19, 1885, but the spot was several days' march from Korti, and it was the second week in February when he reached his new command and began to make arrangements for taking Metemmeh as soon as certain reinforcements reached him.

Meanwhile further terrible news had reached Lord Wolseley on the anniversary of the fall of Coomassie—news that sent a shudder of sorrow throughout the civilised world and that rendered doubtful the further prosecution of the Expedition. Khartum had fallen into the hands of the fanatics and General Gordon was dead! This news was sent on to Buller with orders to him to stay his hand pending instructions from home. The enemy, strongly reinforced by many of their number released from around Khartum, began to appear in formidable force, and when it was ordered that the advance on Metemmeh was not to be made, the retreat of the English column became a matter of anxious moment. The Desert Column was indeed in "the tightest of tight

places," and to Buller fell the trying task of getting it out in the face of an active enemy, strongly outnumbering his own force. Attacked on two days (February 16th and 17th), in the neighbourhood of the Abu Klea wells, General Buller succeeded in inflicting a defeat, but the enemy's reinforcements rendered them more and more formidable, and to allow them to see the commencement of the retreat would have been to invite disaster.

Buller was, however, quite equal to the trying position, and one night, having had camp-fires lighted and bugles sounded as usual, he quietly withdrew his men, and in a really brilliant fashion succeeded in evacuating a position which he could not hold, and in carrying off in safety not only his column but all his sick and wounded. His Commander-in-Chief cordially recognised the valuable work which had been done, and wrote home: "The manner in which the movement from Gubat to Jakdul has been carried out reflects the greatest credit upon General Buller as a leader, and upon all ranks under him. . . . Sir Redvers Buller has done this in a way which has won

him the confidence of all who served under him."

In managing his retreat he first sent off the main part of the column with all sick and wounded to Jakdul, remaining himself with a force numbering about fifteen hundred at Abu Klea, where he lost several men during desultory firing; but from which, having guarded the retreat of his main body, he then cleverly succeeded in getting away without drawing upon himself an attack which might have meant annihilation for him and his brave soldiers.

Arrived at Korti at the end of February with the Desert Column which he had saved, Sir Redvers once more took up his duties as Chief of the Staff—duties which, during his absence, had been performed by his friend Sir Evelyn Wood. When it was decided later—Khartum having fallen and the season become too far advanced—that the Expedition must be brought to an end and the Sudan evacuated, Buller had a number of duties in connection with that evacuation and did not get away from Dongola until June 17th. Ten

days later he sailed with Lord Wolseley and his Staff from Alexandria for home, where he was received no less enthusiastically than on other occasions when he returned fresh with the laurels so readily bestowed by Britain upon her military heroes.

Before leaving Egypt Lord Wolseley sent his final dispatch to the War Office, and in it he had occasion once more to speak warmly of the services which had been rendered him by the hero of this volume. "It would be impossible," wrote the Commander-in-Chief, "for any commander to have been more ably seconded by his Chief of the Staff than I was by Major-General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., K.C.M.G., C.B. To his already well-established reputation as a daring and skilful leader in action he has now added that for great administrative capacity. When the late Major-General Sir Herbert Stewart was wounded, and Colonel Burnaby, whom I had appointed to command at Metemmeh, had been killed, I ordered General Sir Redvers Buller to take command of the Desert Column, and he carried out to my entire satisfaction the difficult operation of

withdrawing it from Gubat to Jakdul in the face of an active enemy—an operation requiring great nicety of execution and a thorough knowledge of the military art. When I received orders that the army was to fall back from its summer quarters on the Nile to the Wady Halfa railway, I entrusted him with the details of this movement, which was also most ably effected. I beg to recommend this officer to your favourable consideration."

General Redvers Buller was created a Knight Commander of the Bath a month or so after his return, and received a medal and clasp.

A good story, by the way, is told of General Buller during the evacuation of the Sudan, a story which capitally illustrates that strong self-reliance—some people would call it obstinacy—which is one of his marked characteristics. It is reported that he was in company with Lord Charles Beresford coming down the Nile, and as their boat approached the First Cataract a sharp discussion arose as to which was the proper channel to take. The soldier advised one, the sailor another, but in the end

Buller's channel was followed with perfect success. "You see, I was right," the General exclaimed exultantly. "What of that?" retorted Beresford. "I *knew* it was the right one myself, and I only recommended the other because I knew you would oppose whatever I said!"

CHAPTER X

Special Commission in Ireland — Fearless as ever—
Thinking for himself—Under-Secretary for Ireland
—Headquarters appointments.

ON returning from Egypt at the end of the Khartum Relief Expedition's unhappily unsuccessful, but nevertheless brilliant, campaign—for capability and brilliance are not inevitably successful—Sir Redvers Buller received the appointment of Deputy-Adjutant-General to the Forces. Although a soldier's administrative work does not loom so large in the public eye as do his achievements in the face of the enemy, they inevitably tell in the long run in the history of the army to which he belongs; and Buller's energy, his power of hard work and his thoughtful enthusiasm were such as to make their mark wherever they

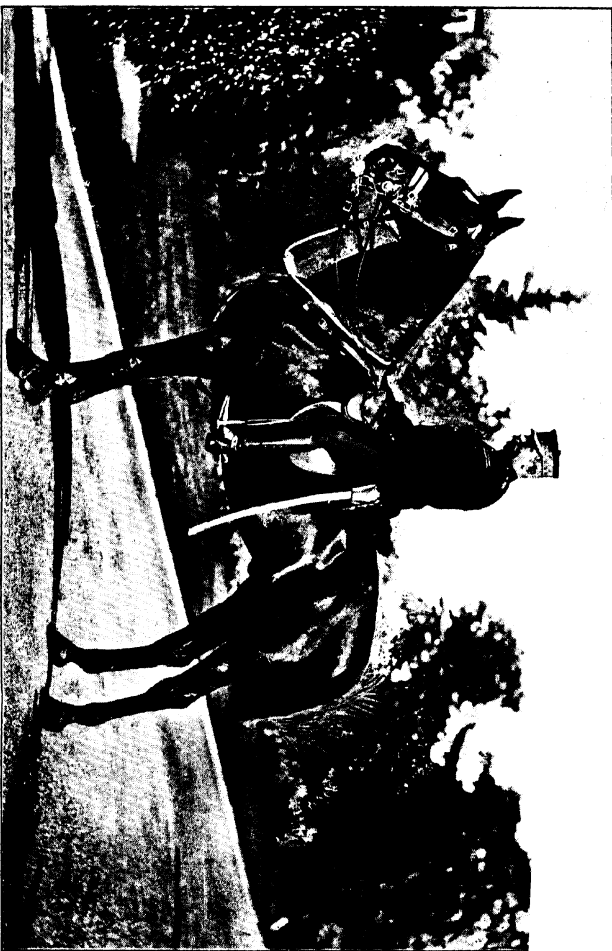


Photo by]

SIR REDVERS BUTLER AND HIS CHARGER, "IRONMONGER."

[C. Knight, Aldershot.

were utilised. There is, however, little for the biographer to enlarge upon in this side of the soldier's life, although to the military expert there is no doubt much pleasure in following out the details in administrative reform initiated or carried out under successive chiefs.

About a year after the evacuation of Egypt it was decided to send Sir Redvers Buller on a new commission, one calling for courage, tact, and individuality, and how well the soldier proved himself fitted for the task will soon be seen. There had been a worse than usual outbreak in the chronic troubles of Ireland. "Moonlighting" was a growing crime; refusal to pay rent, under the dictates of the Land League, was become widespread, and, as a consequence, evictions were growing* brutally frequent, with a result that farms from which people were evicted could find no new tenants. In August, 1886, Sir Redvers Buller was appointed on a "secret commission," and left London for Ireland on the 26th of that month. On the very same day a member of the House of Commons demanded an explanation of "the appointment of a military officer over an exten-

sive district in Ireland with undefined ministerial and magisterial powers." The day after leaving London Sir Redvers reached Dublin, and after consultation with the officials there, proceeded to the south-west of the country, where his work was to be done.

The local press received the news of the appointment with virulent abuse, and accused Buller of going to Kerry merely as a friend of the landlords to aid and abet them in the carrying out of wholesale evictions. They little knew the man whom they were reviling; an Englishman, a military officer, and sent there on a "secret" commission, it was assumed that he must be there as an enemy. As a matter of fact in his own county of Devonshire he is known as one of the most liberal of landlords, and he really entered upon his new work in the most sympathetic spirit. Very plain words appeared in the Kerry newspapers, and, as though to bid defiance to him, the time of his arrival was marked by a number of "moonlighting" outrages.

The district was in a very disturbed condition. Buller was not the man to be deterred

by any stories of danger, and from the very moment of his arrival bore himself with such quiet intrepidity as must have won the admiration even of those least likely to agree with him. The day after his arrival he is said to have walked out from his hotel alone, much to the surprise of everyone there, without having made any arrangements for a police escort. He had not, however, got far before he noticed that he was being followed by two men, when he immediately turned back and found that they were a couple of the Constabulary. Buller at once asked them what they wanted. They replied that they had been sent to protect him, when he promptly told them to leave him alone, as he needed no protection, but they declared that they dared not do so without orders from Captain Plunkett, under whose instructions they were then acting. Sir Redvers at once communicated with Plunkett and told him that he was perfectly safe and needed no police protection, and insisted upon the escort being withdrawn. Thenceforward the new magistrate roamed about his district without any "protectors,"

and also, be it added, without suffering any molestation at the hands of the "moonlighters" or other disaffected folk. He was indeed very popular after a time with the peasants, partly, it is probable, owing to his confidence in them, or his disregard of personal danger, and partly perhaps because of his not altogether unfavourable view of the Land League.

It was early noticed by the peasantry with some surprise that General Buller had dispensed with any police guard, and moved freely about by himself despite all words used against him. Then, too, it was soon learnt that instead of blindly supporting the evictions he was having the unheard-of courage to think for himself. Instead of supporting the landlords through thick and thin, Sir Redvers began to use his influence to stay the virulent "eviction fever." It was stated that he refused, for example, to allow police to attend evictions except on having received ten days' notice of their being required, and that when a force was applied for, General Buller at once set about making himself acquainted with the facts of the case. If he considered that the tenant

had a grievance he directed his secretary to write to the landlord, stating that he considered it inadvisable to proceed. The test which Buller was said to have applied to prove if the tenant had a grievance was whether, considering his rent and the depression, he was able to pay the rent demanded. He denied, however, having any such power on this subject as was popularly credited to him, but it is a significant fact that there was within a couple of months of his arrival in the county a very considerable falling off in the number of Kerry evictions.

How great a change was soon worked in the popular feeling towards the military officer who had been hailed with such an outburst of abuse may be seen in the altered tone of the contemporary newspapers and in the speeches of public men.

Mr. John Dillon, M.P., speaking at Keenagh, Co. Longford, on November 7, 1886, made, during the course of a lengthy speech, some references to General Buller, which illustrate how that officer determined firstly to think for himself, and secondly to act in accordance with his own convictions. "The Kerry people showed,"

said Mr. Dillon, "that if farms were evicted no man would step into his neighbour's shoes, and to-day in the County Kerry there are three or four hundred farms on which no man dare lay his foot. What is the result of that? The result is that they sent down a general officer named Buller to put down moonlighting and coerce the Kerry tenants. But wait till I tell you what happened. General Buller had not been two months in Kerry before he began to coerce the Kerry landlords, not the tenants. The other day when Lord Kenmare assembled a large force of police for the purpose of carrying out these evictions we have heard so much about, General Buller ordered the police to go home, and sent a circular to Lord Kenmare; he would not allow any police to evictions until he had first found whether the eviction was cruel or not."

In this same month of November, too, Sir Redvers Buller gave important evidence before the Cowper Irish Land Commission—evidence which was distasteful to the accepted notions of those in authority, but which was the outcome of honest observation and strong common

sense. The organs supporting the Government which had praised the selection of Sir Redvers Buller for the difficult "special mission" to Ireland were among the first to object when his views, formed on the spot, did not tally with their own. He was indeed blamed for not upholding evictions "instead of passing judgment upon questions as to the fairness of rents and the solvency of farmers." Less bigoted critics readily admitted that the discretion which he displayed in a difficult position and in the execution of a thankless task justified his selection by the Ministry; for whilst proving by the energy which he infused into his subordinates that "moonlighters" would no longer escape with impunity, he impressed upon landlords the necessity for forbearance in the treatment of their impoverished tenantry.

Far from being unpopular, wrote an Irish newspaper critic within a couple of months of General Buller's arrival in Kerry, "among the people he is fast becoming as great an object of respect, as the landlords, and a section of the officers of the Constabulary,

who have been remarkable for general incompetency, combined with a certain assumption of superiority and aristocratic bearing, particularly dislike him, both because he has been placed over them, and because he has compelled them to do their duty, instead of helping to form the upper crust of county town society, and lounging in hotel bars and county clubs." With the more earnest officers and men of the force he was deservedly popular.

At the beginning of December General Buller's mission was brought to an abrupt end by his being appointed Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle. This position he did not occupy for long, and in 1887 he was appointed Quartermaster-General to the Forces, a post which he held until 1890. To him is largely due the credit for the "creation" of the Army Service Corps, which was constituted by a Royal Warrant issued on December 11, 1888. His experience as Chief of the Staff to Lord Wolseley in Egypt here served him well, for he had then had to organise the greatest supply work that had hitherto been attempted, both in respect of

distance and of difficulty. On this new body, which had taken the place of the old and unsatisfactory Commissariat and Transport Department, Sir Redvers spent much time and pains, but it had only been in existence a year when Sir Evelyn Wood took up the Aldershot command, and paid close and careful attention to the corps, for which during his tenure of the command he did so much.

At the beginning of 1888, it may be of interest to mention, the Buller and Bassett Tin and Copper Company, Limited, was formed for acquiring and working certain properties on the lands of General Buller in Devonshire.

In October, 1890, Major-General Sir Redvers Buller was appointed Adjutant-General to the Forces, in succession to his old leader, Viscount Wolseley, and continued to occupy the position until 1897. A good story is told of him during his holding of this office. When he was on duty at the Horse Guards a question had been raised by the Field-Marshal commanding in Ireland. It was decided by Sir Redvers—speaking of course for the Duke of Cambridge, then Commander-in-Chief—and

decided in a fashion that did not please the Field-Marshal who had brought it forward, and he accordingly protested. The second answer simply upheld the first. "The decision was given," wrote General Buller, "in accordance with the precedent established by my predecessor as Adjutant-General"—in other words, by the very Field-Marshal who had raised the question and objected to the decision!

In April, 1891, Sir Redvers was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General. During the same year a great loan exhibition of pictures and other objects of interest connected with Eton College was held in celebration of the 450th anniversary of the foundation of the College, and General Buller was one of the many distinguished old Etonians who formed the committee and took an active interest in the success of the exhibition.

In the summer of 1896 Sir Redvers was again promoted, this time to the rank of a full General. During his occupancy of the post of Adjutant-General he was the trusted friend and right-hand man of the Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-Chief, and indeed, on the Duke's

resignation in 1895, it was thought by some people that he would probably be succeeded by Sir Redvers Buller, but the highest position in the English army was given—and Buller himself would be one of the first to admit, was very properly given—to the great leader under whom he had won his honours. The story runs that a year or so after the Duke of Cambridge had retired, when His Royal Highness happened once to be in the Adjutant-General's room at the War Office bemoaning his hard fate, Sir Redvers turned on him saying, "Come, sir, admit that you are ever so much better since you went out of harness!" "Upon my soul you're right! I believe it has added years to my life," admitted the Duke.

General Buller was appointed in 1897 to be a member of the Royal Commission for the British Section of the Paris International Exhibition of 1900.

On October 9, 1898, when the Duke of Connaught had completed his five years of service as General Officer Commanding at Aldershot, General Sir Redvers Buller was appointed to succeed him, so that just a year

had elapsed since he took up that high command before he was called upon to lead a British army against the Boers of the Transvaal. In that year he has made a strong impression at Aldershot—an impression of really permanent value. Three or four months after entering upon the work he began to issue a remarkable series of special memoranda dealing with matters of moment to both officers and men. These memoranda, based on the actual experiences of a lifetime and the true instincts of “a born soldier,” are full of practical advice and touch upon several matters of vital importance in actual warfare. His first “memorandum” consisted of sound advice on the conduct of advanced guards of infantry ; this was followed by a severe criticism of company field firing, in which he offered a series of remarks which would not have been necessary, he added, “if commanders had read their drill-books as they ought to have done” ; he further went on to point out that battles are won by resolute, enthusiastic men, not by jacks-in-boxes—by which term he meant those officers who indulge in the evil practice of

telling men to "bob up, fire, and bob down again."

For the merely conventional state of things it is said by those who have watched his work at Aldershot Sir Redvers Buller never disguised his dislike, and he introduced important changes in musketry regulations with the object of improving the fire discipline and training of soldiers on the manœuvre ground. After close observation during his first Aldershot drill-season he complained that the commanders did not "make-believe" enough. Both men and commanders, he said, in dealing with the subject of field training, must be guided by the demands of the moment and the character of the ground and country, adding: "Infantry commanders look too much to preserving a stereotyped line, too little to the study of ground and general direction. As with the formations so with the fire. The fire of five rifles unexpectedly will often shake a body of troops more than the fire of fifty if they are prepared to receive it."

A few weeks before the close of his first year in command of the Aldershot district,

General Buller issued some further interesting memoranda concerning the field training there. One or two brief passages will serve to show at once the thoroughness of his watchfulness and the striking way in which he can illustrate his lessons. Commanders, he reminded the officers, want practice as much as the men: "an attack is like a team of horses, it requires a coachman, and if not carefully driven soon gets out of hand." Again, he said of both cavalry and infantry, "they know how to do it, but not what to do." Another happy illustration ran as follows: "In order to learn to read a child is taught his alphabet, then words of one syllable, then to read; and when he has learned to read well he forgets that he ever had to learn either the alphabet or to spell. Substitute drill, musketry, and battle-training, for alphabet, spelling, and reading, and the lesson is the same." Of volunteer officers he said they "harass their men with unnecessary movements . . . [and] should strive to pay less attention to what their men are doing and more to what they are going to do with their men."

At Aldershot as elsewhere "thorough" seems to have been the motto which General Buller has acted.

Several stories are repeated about his command, one which is doubtfully true to the effect that at the first Aldershot review graced by the Queen's presence Her Majesty is reported to have said, "I have not seen much of you lately, Sir Redvers Buller." "That's not my fault, Madam," was the soldier's blunt reply. In carrying out his duties at Aldershot there was never any fuss or worry, but a calm and regular course of work. He does not, it is said, believe in over-preparation—not always to the satisfaction of his Staff. As his own Deputy-Adjutant-General put it in a mild protest: "In the Duke of Cornaught's time we had too much rehearsal, now——" "There is not enough, eh?" retorted the General, catching him up with a grim smile. It need scarcely be said to those who know anything of his character that the mild protest did not in the slightest alter the commanding officer's method of pursuing his work.

Such characteristics as have been here in-

dedicated are by no means unfortunate in a military commander ; indeed, they are probably important factors in his success, and Sir Redvers Buller's blunt outspokenness, his tenacity of purpose, and his insistence upon getting from those under him the best of which they are capable, have no doubt combined to make him admired as a leader by the army, and also to inspire the very strong confidence which his countrymen generally have in him.

CHAPTER XI

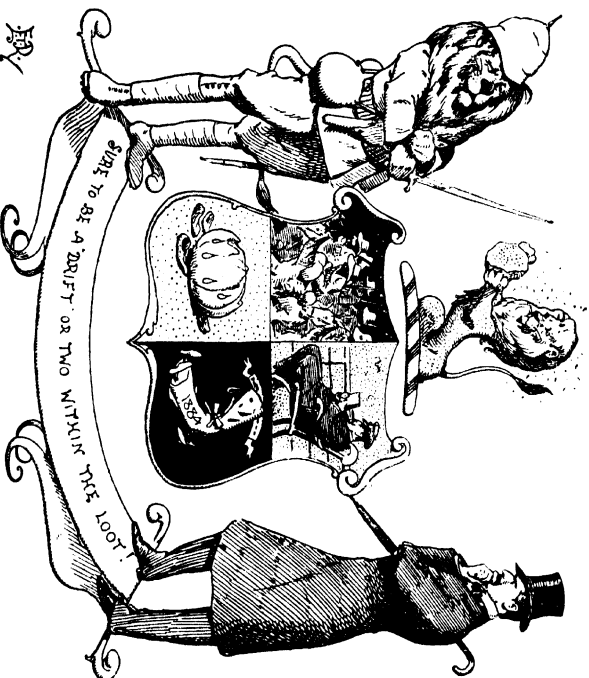
The Transvaal War—Some personal characteristics.

WHEN, during the summer of 1899, the matters in dispute between England and the South African Republic proved difficult of adjustment, and it began to be thought possible that the crisis might at length render necessary an appeal to the arbitrament of the sword, it was soon pointed out that the officer commanding at Aldershot was likely to be the man selected for the position of Commander-in-Chief. Then, when military preparations were set afoot, it was soon known that the popular selection had been made. And that the selection might well be popular is shown by the preceding series of brief glances at the

career of Sir Redvers Buller. His bravery as a soldier and ability as a leader had been proved again and again, and, what was even more to the point, he had had some diversified experience of fighting in South Africa—against the Kafirs, the Zulus, and against the Boers themselves.

In build General Buller is, as his comrade in arms, Sir Evelyn Wood, has described him, “a tall and powerful man,” and of some of his personal characteristics a friend wrote as follows at the time of his departure from England to take up the South African command: “First, and before all, it cannot be stated too clearly and emphatically that he is what our friends across the pond call a ‘real live man.’ There is no humbug about him, nor anything unreal; what he says he means; what he promises he performs; what is given to him to do he does, or has done so far, and that is much to say in this disappointing world. His fitness for the job now entrusted to him cannot be questioned. He is the best soldier of his standing available for the present crisis. . . . Buller knows his trade by heart, is up to every move, can handle

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Punch

GENERAL THE RT. HON. REDYERS, VISCOUNT BULLER OF WAREHAM
DOWN AND SETTLEHAM, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., V.C.

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every tool with the perfected skill of the master craftsman. He has studied soldiering incessantly, practised it continually, and gained an intimate acquaintance with that most difficult profession, war. Those who have seen him at work will bear ample testimony to his worth. He has the natural gifts indispensable to a good general: he is watchful and observant, with a keen eye for country, a full appreciation of what troops can do and when it should be done; he can wait for the right moment, and then strike with concentrated effect. He has the cool judgment that comes of profound self-reliance, and his courage is not only of the physical 'two o'clock in the morning' kind, amply shown by feats of daring that are household words, but the rarer moral quality that rises superior to the darkest and most dangerous crises of war."

That this estimate of the General's character is not an exaggeration may be imagined by all who have followed the story of his career. And this being so, it is not surprising to find that his appointment to the position of chief control in the event of war against the Trans-

vaal was a widely popular one. When at length the Boer ultimatum rendered war absolutely inevitable, there was no further delay, and on October 14th General Sir Redvers Buller sailed for South Africa to repel the invasion of the British colony there, and to carry the war into the enemy's country. His departure was made the occasion of a great public demonstration, for whatever the hidden springs which brought about the conflict, whatever may be the truth as to the possibility of its having been averted, the war against the Transvaal was unquestionably a popular one. The "Jingo" spirit of the country was aroused, and the populace was ready to cheer to the echo every sign of British militancy.

Yet it may be hoped that of the many thousands of people who gathered around Waterloo Station and Southampton Docks to bid farewell to Sir Redvers Buller, some were cheering the hero for his personal qualities quite apart from the cause in which he was embarking.

A dense crowd awaited the General at Waterloo Station, where he was bidden farewell

by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Cambridge, and such distinguished fellow-soldiers—and soldiers with whom he had been associated in many trying campaigns—as Lord Wolseley and Sir Evelyn Wood. Stirring as the scene was, it was but a brief one, and with a “Good-bye, Buller ; good luck to you !” from the Prince of Wales, the train steamed away to Southampton. At the seaport there were fresh scenes of enthusiasm and excitement when the General and his Staff arrived and went on board the *Dunottar Castle* (where Sir Redvers’ two chargers, the dark Ironmonger, with white blaze on the forehead, and the dark chestnut Biffin, with a white face, were already comfortably housed). The last few moments of the impressive leave-taking was described as follows by an eye-witness :—

“For more than half an hour the throng on the quay and the crowds on the ranges outside grew and grew and cheered and cheered. Lady Buller and her daughters left the ship after the Mayor had taken his departure, but returned to take another farewell. After this the General was recognised standing on the lower

floor between decks aft, and was cheered to the echo. Dressed in plain travelling clothes, Sir Redvers raised his black bowler hat and acknowledged the greeting with a calm and kindly smile. Very few of the thousands around could see him there, and it was a real act of kindness to them when the General, in sheer complacency, went up on the bridge and came bareheaded to the end facing the quay. A scene of intense enthusiasm was raised by this simple act of sheer good-nature. A roar of applause arose. Old men and young men and women in the throng positively quivered with the emotion which the most stolid and seasoned among them could not but feel. For there stood a typical English commander of men, strong in fact as in name, the recipient for the moment of his countrymen's farewells and of their implied and expressed demonstrations of confidence and admiration. It was impossible that even an experienced officer to whom self-command is more than a second nature should be quite unmoved by so thrilling a spectacle. But the feeling was restrained. A beneficent smile beamed over the face of the great soldier

on the bridge, as he appreciated, as he doubtless did, the full significance of the demonstration given to him and to all that he represented."

At the beginning of September, when it was still doubtful whether Sir Redvers Buller would be sent out in command of the English army in the event of war breaking out between this country and the Transvaal, the General wrote the following pathetic letter to a white-haired veteran of his old regiment :—

" GOVERNMENT HOUSE,

" FARNBOROUGH, HANTS.

" *Sept.* 10, 1899.

" SERGT. MEEK.

" DEAR SIR,—I am much distressed to find that your letter of the 12th July has never been answered. At the time it arrived my poor boy in the 2nd Battalion 60th was very ill in Calcutta. He died on July 20th. A great many people were kind enough to write to me, and in the press of letters yours got overlooked. I know you will understand it. I was very pleased to get it. Men such as you and

your two friends are always pleasant to hear of. It was one of the luckiest days in my life when I joined the 2nd Battalion 60th at Benares, in November, 1859. If I have to go out to fight the Boers I am glad to say I shall have three battalions of the old regiment there, as the 1st Battalion is already in Natal, the 3rd is going out from home, and the dear old 2nd Battalion is now on its way from Calcutta to Natal. It is in fine order. I only wish my poor boy was still alive to go with me. How he would have enjoyed his luck!

“With best wishes to you and your two comrades,

“I am, yours truly,

“REDVERS BULLER.”

It must indeed have been trying to the General to meet his old battalion and to realise afresh the bitter loss which he and his wife had suffered in the untimely death of the young soldier a few months before. It was from India that he himself had set out with the 2nd Battalion to get his first experience of actual war, and now it was from India that that

battalion journeyed to South Africa forty years later to take part under his supreme command in one of the most trying wars of our generation.

The son referred to in the letter I have quoted was one of Sir Redvers' two stepsons, the second of whom, Lieutenant C. A. Howard (of the 1st Battalion of the King's, or Shropshire Light Infantry), accompanies the General as aide-de-camp during the present war. It may here be added that Sir Redvers Buller has a daughter of his own besides two stepdaughters. Here, too, it may be said that the General, although as a commander and as a War Office official he has a reputation of being brusque and abrupt with those with whom he is brought into contact, is the kindest of men in his own home, either at Downes or at Government House, Farnborough, or at his town residence in Bruton Street. Within his own family circle he altogether unbends, and is the life and soul of the conversation, the friend and companion of his children. He is, too, very hospitable, ever ready to talk over things with an old friend, and a distinctly "clubbable" man of the best type.

Before the Commander-in-Chief had been a week at sea, the first significant battle of the war had been fought and won by the British at Glencoe, to be followed on the next day (October 21st) by a yet more decisive victory at Elandslaagte, and he arrived at the Cape on the evening of October 30th to learn of the great disaster to our troops, which had occurred at Ladysmith, when close upon a thousand men, cut off from the main army and short of ammunition, were compelled to surrender to the foe.

Well aware of the fact that his presence at the front was awaited with anxiety, and eager to be in the field at the earliest possible moment, the impatient General would not even hear of the steamer which carried him out pausing to get news when passing a mail-boat from the Cape. And if he was impatient to be on the scene of action the nation at home and the British in South Africa were no less anxious to know that he had arrived at his destination and had taken over the duties of his high command. When he landed, early on the morning of the last day of October, he

was given such a cordial reception as had never before been experienced by any visitor to the capital city of South Africa. Indeed it was commented upon at the time as being remarkable that the arrival of one man on the scene could produce such an unmistakable sense of relief throughout the Colony as was experienced when amid the shouts of "Bravo, General!" and "Avenge Majuba!" the impassive soldier drove from the *Dunottar Castle* to Government House to consult with General Forestier Walker, the commander of the English forces at the Cape.

Since then a large part of General Buller's army has reached South Africa, and he has been busy maturing his plans for carrying on a very severe and very serious campaign. After arranging for a column under Lord Methuen to proceed north to the relief of Kimberley, another to go from Port Elizabeth towards the frontier of the Orange Free State, and a third from Durban to the relief of Sir George White shut up with his army in Ladysmith, Sir Redvers Buller himself went on from Cape Town to Durban, and at the beginning of

December was at the front in Natal, with the whole of his countrymen anxiously yet confidently following the daily story of his movements and those of his army against a stubborn foe.

THE END.

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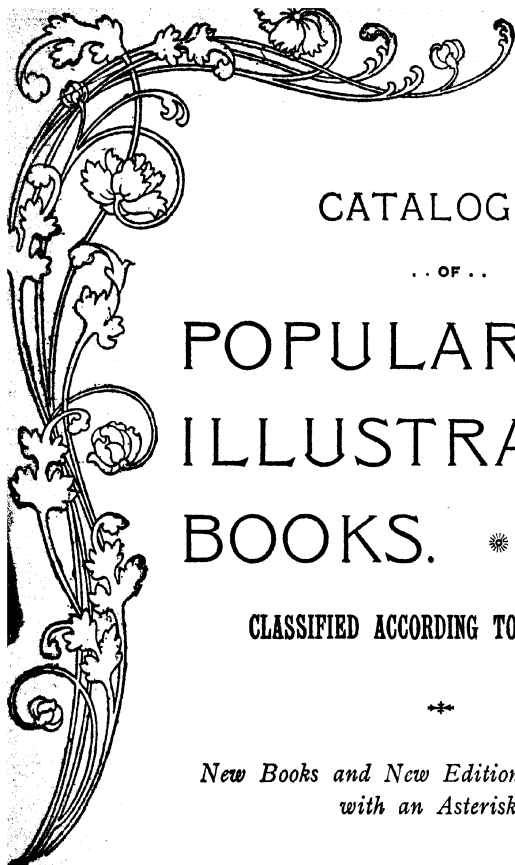
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